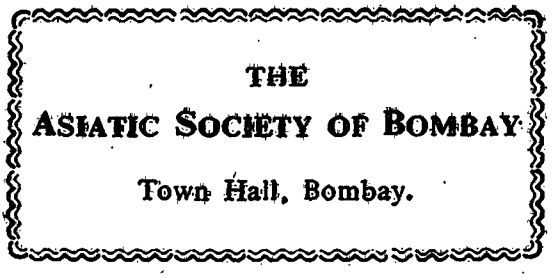
God
252.62
Sam1Ser
111432



Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 19 September, 2016

The enduring Conflict of Christ with the Sin that is in the World.

SERMONS

PREACHED DURING

THE SEASON OF LENT, 1865,

IN

OXFORD.

111432
C.C.
C. c. 21

BY

THE BISHOP OF OXFORD.
REV. R. MILMAN, M.A.
THE BISHOP OF OXFORD.
REV. J. R. WOODFORD, M.A.
REV. T. L. CLAUGHTON, M.A.
REV. R. RANDALL, M.A.
REV. H. W. BURROWES, M.A.
REV. H. P. LIDDON, M.A.
REV. A. B. EVANS, M.A.
REV. E. B. PUSEY, D.D.
REV. J. MOORHOUSE, M.A.
REV. W. J. BUTLER, M.A.
REV. T. T. CARTER, M.A.
ARCHDEACON BICKERSTETH.
ARCHDEACON WORDSWORTH.

WITH A PREFACE

BY

SAMUEL, LORD BISHOP OF OXFORD.

Oxford,
AND 377, STRAND, LONDON:
JOHN HENRY AND JAMES PARKER.
1865.

God
252.62
Sam/Ser
111432

Printed by Messrs. Parker, Cornmarket, Oxford.

PREFACE.

THE Sermons which make up this volume were preached in Oxford during Lent, 1865, by preachers of my appointment.

This series of Sermons, dealing as it does with the special corruptions to overcome which Christ has planted His Church on earth, appeared when it was preached to excite an interest even above those which had preceded it.

At the earnest request of many who listened to these Sermons they are now published.

May it please God by His Holy Spirit to make them effectual for the spreading of His truth and the quickening of His Church.

S. OXON.

CUDDESDON PALACE,
July, 1865.

CONTENTS.

SERMON I.

(p. 1.)

The Church ordained by Christ to maintain His Conflict with the special Corruptions of every Age.

EXODUS xv. 25.

BY THE LORD BISHOP OF OXFORD.

SERMON II.

(p. 11.)

The Church ordained by Christ to maintain His Conflict with the special Corruptions of every Age.

EPHESIANS vi. 12.

BY R. MILMAN, M.A.

SERMON III.

(p. 27.)

The Conflict:—with Shallowness in Religion.

REV. iii. 17.

BY THE LORD BISHOP OF OXFORD.

SERMON IV.

(p. 41.)

The Conflict:—with Impatience of Authority.

GALATIANS iv. 26.

BY J. R. WOODFORD, M.A.

SERMON V.

(p. 53.)

The Conflict:—in a Luxurious Age.

EZEKIEL xvi. 48—50.

BY T. L. CLAUGHTON, M.A.

SERMON VI.

(p. 67.)

The Conflict:—in a Luxurious Age.

PHILIPP. iii. 18, 19.

BY R. RANDALL, M.A.

SERMON VII.

(p. 83.)

The Conflict:—with Impurity.

NUMBERS xxv. 11.

BY H. W. BURROWES, M.A.

SERMON VIII.

(p. 97.)

The Conflict:—with undue Exaltation of Intellect.

2 CORINTHIANS x. 5.

BY H. P. LIDDON, M.A.

SERMON IX.

(p. 121.)

The Conflict:—with undue Exaltation of Intellect.

ACTS xxvii. 11.

BY A. B. EVANS, M.A.

SERMON X.

(p. 137.)

The Conflict:—in a Superficial Age.

PSALM xxxix. 6, 7.

BY E. B. PUSEY, D.D.

SERMON XI.

(p. 157.)

The Conflict:—in an Age of great Material Progress.

ST. MATTHEW vi. 33.

BY J. MOORHOUSE, M.A.

SERMON XII.

(p. 173.)

The Conflict:—in a Money-getting Age.

ST. LUKE xii. 15.

BY W. J. BUTLER, M.A.

SERMON XIII.

(p. 191.)

The Conflict:—in a Restless Age.

1 KINGS xix. 12.

BY T. T. CARTER, M.A.

SERMON XIV.

(p. 211.)

The Conflict:—with the Spirit of Expediency.

ST. JOHN xviii. 14.

BY ARCHDEACON BICKERSTETH.

SERMON XV.

(p. 225.)

The End of the Conflict.

REVELATION vi. 2.

BY ARCHDEACON WORDSWORTH.

SERMON I.

The Church ordained by Christ to maintain His Conflict with the special Corruptions of every Age.

EXODUS xv. 25.

"And he cried unto the Lord; and the Lord shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet."

THIS was a momentous crisis in the history of Moses. The first sharp touch of their wilderness trials was exasperating the people against their almost untried leader. They had now been three days in the wilderness, and had found no water. We know the terrible effects of drought in its extreme measure even on disciplined and self-commanding men: how under its piercing suffering the wild beast wakes up within them. We know the tumultuous rush of a multitude choking each other's and their own approach to the water, when it seems to each one that he must drink or die. We can conceive what must have been the madness of this undisciplined people, fresh from the sensuality of Egypt, with all the vehement excitement of a just-recovered liberty. For the moment, all God's dealings with them were well-nigh forgotten in their frenzy. The great deliverance from the Red Sea was already fading away from their eyes, and the most treasonable murmurs were beginning to take the place of admiration for their leader.

But in the midst of their agony they come suddenly upon the coveted spring. We may conceive the wild haste, the selfish confusion, the thirsty passion of the untrained and maddened people. We may easily picture to ourselves their disappointment when they found that the desert fountain mocked even their fevered, parched lips by its exceeding bitterness: "They could not drink of the waters of Marah." This surely was the most exasperating of all. It was worse thus to have and not to have, than even to have sunk in the death-thirst without the false hope of relief having been thus madly roused within them. Doubtless, as happened soon afterwards, in this first burst of their rage, the people were almost ready to stone the leader who had so deceived them. Moses must have seen full before him the wild merciless death to which so many a leader of a tumultuous horde has helplessly bowed. But in his utmost peril he was not without help. Then, in his uttermost distress and mortification, the staggering Prophet "cried unto the Lord; and the Lord shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet."

Full of manifold instruction is the direct meaning of all this; but it is not for that direct teaching that I have chosen it for our thoughts this evening. Rather is it exclusively to its typical signification that I would call your attention this night. For that there is in it this typical meaning I cannot doubt. All their history through, the old Israel was the antitype of the new. God's free and loving election was common to both: the wilderness with its sins, its wanderings, and its perils was this our life of trial; the land of promise was the heavenly inheritance which is before us. Specially did the Lord hold up over and over again in promise, em-

blem, and forecast shadow, the mighty mystery of the Redeemer and the Cross; sowing the tarrying ages with acted promises of the blessed end. In the brazen serpent, in the scape-goat of the wilderness, in the lamb of atonement, in the blood of sprinkling, in the hyssop and the scarlet wool, leading on the eye of an obedient faith to Him who taketh away the sin of the world. And here surely is another, and not an indistinct prophecy of the end. For what is this leading of the people into the wilderness, but this life of moral discipline and true probation as it is cast on the successive generations of the whole race? What is it but that life of consciousness, of disappointment, and of trial which wakes up in each separate one as childhood with its flesh-pots, and its leeks, and its onions is over, and the probation of the reasonable being begins to close round him with its sins, its sufferings, and its fears.

Surely every age, surely every man, have gone their three days' journeying in that wilderness, and found how dry it is; surely they, too, have been mocked over and over again, not only by the false promise of the fleeting mirage, but also by finding out the utter bitterness of the long-coveted and late-found springs. What word is written broader or more abundant over all these waters of the desert than Marah, Marah! bitterness and drought, drought and bitterness! And how deep is that thirst of the longing spirit! What generations have fainted under it, what great spirits has it utterly subdued; what cries have there been against it, from ages and from nations; what passionate entreaties from thirsting hearts, which could not find for their utmost need one drop of water but what was turned by its utter bitterness into a mocking delusion!

Oh what a cry has gone up from generation after

generation into the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth! And when the time was come, how did He answer it? Surely, in very deed, even as he answered Moses. For what was the setting-up of the Church of Christ, but the casting in the wood of a certain tree into the waters of man's life, which his sin had embittered? For who else but He could shew the remedy; and what else is the work of His Church, but to heal this bitterness—to heal it for the generations of men—to heal it for each separate heart as it cries unto the Lord, and is content to learn from Him of that only wood which can for it heal the bitterness of the bitter waters?

Here, then, is the conflict of the Church of Christ throughout the generations with the sin that is in the world: a conflict at once of judgment and of love: of judgment against the sin, of love for the sinner. And this conflict it indeed wages by the casting in of the wood of the "certain tree." The Cross of Christ is the only healer of the bitter waters, for the race or for the individual.

We shall see this more clearly, and be led, I trust, to the practical use which every one of us should make of it, if we examine more in detail the process of this marvel of mercy, and see how it is that the Church of Christ is indeed His instrument for accomplishing His gracious purpose.

I. It then only, because it alone comes from Him who knew what was in men, can really deal with man as man.

Earthly philosophies might do much to ameliorate and soothe the passionate and suffering fever of man's life, but not one of them could touch the root of the evil. They did not know it. They could not reach down to it. They could not speak to the suffering

heart of man so as to reach the ground of his anguish, without knowing first the holiness of God, and, next, that which cannot be known, except in the sight of God's holiness, the nature of sin, as sin. Without knowing the fall of man, and the possibility of his restoration, they could only babble about the accidents, and not reach the heart of the disease. They could not explain man to himself; the riddle was too many-sided, the enigma too perplexing, for them to solve. The twilight in which they sought to read the mystic characters which were to reveal the secret, was cast on them, too, with its darkening, bewildering gloom. The Church of Christ only could understand the mystery; could read the writing on the wall; could tell the affrighted waker out of sleep what his dream had been, and what was its interpretation. It only could explain to man why he was at once so great and so little—interpreting to him plainly the words of that grand chant which brake ever and anon out of his heart in the noblest aspirations; shewing him at the same moment the degradation of sin that was within him, and even as it awoke within him a sense of guilt which he had never known, shewing him a free deliverance from it; and with all this teaching him a way whereby he could escape from the power of this inward enemy; in which he could defy its violence, repair its injuries, and so regain his birthright.

II. And then, next, all this it did not, by occupying his mind with a dry and barren and difficult system of teaching, which to one in such straits would have been little better than mockery, but by fixing his eyes on the person of Him who by His own sufferings and death had of His mere love made this deliverance possible. Thus the serpent-stricken man to whom a longer, a more intricate, a more perplexing mode of

being cured would have been impossible, could look and live. For in that look was life. The sight of that Countenance of Love worked with an inward and insensible power its gracious ends. Here was indeed a new and a sufficient spring of healing, for here awoke with all its constraining power a new affection. He looked up to this loving and mighty Healer, and then was drawn by a power above his nature out of his awakening heart the cry of wonder, "Who loved me, and gave Himself for me;" and so the sight of that love kindled his love, and that new love of itself cleansed, as nothing else could have cleansed, his inmost heart. It, too, slaked the thirst of his spirit; he had some one to live for, some one to lean on, to trust to. His heart's utterance became, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ[a]." And this was no partial alteration: all was changed. "Yea, doubtless," he went on to say, "and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in Him."

III. And yet more than this: all this was taught him, not as a philosophy, not as something to be learned as a theory, however true and beautiful, but as part of a divine order, into which he was himself brought. He did not merely hear about the life of Christ, he partook of it: "To me to live is Christ." "The life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for *me*." It was not, therefore, now only, Christ before him, but Christ in him. It was "Christ *in me* the hope of glory." This was the blessed fruit of the marvel of

[a] Philipp. iii. 7.

the incarnation. The Lord had become man to give Himself for man. The Christian verities of the Creed led him on to the sacramental life of the regenerate. The wood of the atonement cast into the stream of humanity healed all the bitterness of the fallen life. The mystery of the new life wrapped him round, and took up into itself every part of his being. The commonest acts, the most ordinary performance of duty became full of Christ, and so labour became ease, and the bitter sweet, and pain joy, and suffering rest; because he then was most with the Lord, when he shared the most in the likeness of His life: he had been indeed baptized into the mystery of a life which was "hid with Christ in God," and all this was most truly and directly a conflict with the sin which is in the world.

For the essential character of this work of renewal is, that it is not a general amendment of the whole race, without their concurrence or consciousness, by a general influence, by some new law of being, which acting as an unperceived principle alters the condition of all, but a victory over sin *in* each one it possesses, and then through him on others, and so in the progress of this work a double conflict is inevitable.

(a.) In every man it must be waged with the sin which is within himself; and a fierce conflict, yea, almost unto death, it is. Read St. Paul's account of it in the seventh chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, and you may see in those passionate lines how terrible in great spirits is that conflict. Hear him describing the strife of the awakening conscience with the law of sin in the members, the helplessness and yet the struggling, writhing agony of the stricken man, the despairing cry in which he pours out his soul, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

And then, next, (b), it is a real conflict with evil in all around the regenerate man—with evil in fallen spirits, in men, in social institutions, in the whole life, seen and unseen, which he is leading; for we wrestle not merely against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against spiritual wickedness in high places: and this contest never ceases in the individual man or in the redeemed family until the end is won; it is ever reviving, ever renewed, ever maintained by that inward life which is Christ in each one of His, resting on that reconciliation which His cross has wrought; it is the working in the bitter waters of the wood of "the certain tree" the hand of God has shewn.

Here, then, we reach the conclusion to which all that has been said has tended. YOU must each one undertake the struggle. You have to fight out the age-long conflict. First, by finding peace yourselves, and then by maintaining truth around you; by living the life of Christ, by resisting evil in His strength, by healing the bitter waters of your own generation, by casting into them again in faith, and prayer, and holy purpose, the wood of the "certain tree" which God has shewn to every one who does indeed believe in Christ. The duty of doing this in general is the subject of to-night: this you will hear throughout this Lent set before you in particulars hereafter. From week to week I would pray you to gather and listen to the words of wisdom, power, and love which we trust God will enable His servants here to speak on many of the separate parts of this great contention. To-night let me only say, prepare yourselves to take in earnest and at once your own parts in it. There is no escape from it: every one of you must fight or yield—must be a traitor or a conqueror. You are in the conflict; it is raging round

you, in you. It is NOW raging. It is not, as the enemy would whisper, something that must be hereafter. Now it rages round you; now it rages in you. It is not that when this stage of life, so soon to pass with many of you, has closed upon you, life will begin in earnest. Now in all its terrible, now in all its blessed reality, it is within you and around you; now in your college chapel, now in your time of secret prayer, now in your hour of study, now in the lecture and the schools, now no less really in the wine-party and the hours of relaxation. Life is passing with you, with all its terrible reality, and marking you His or the enemy's. So soft, so noiseless are the strokes of that mighty wing of time which is sweeping over you, that you feel not its touch; and yet that touch, light as it seems, is marking you with eternal lineaments and leaving on your spirit unalterable lines.

Oh, then, now and here, cast, with solemn consciousness of what the mighty action is, the wood of that tree of healing into the waters of your own life, and strive with it to heal, too, the bitterness of all the current round you. Such a life must be a life of effort, of self-restraint, often of self-denial. But, believe me, it is a life of blessedness unutterable. Marah is unwritten for the true follower of the Cross. The bitter waters are healed. In every struggle He will be with you, who never leaves or forsakes those who trust in Him. You shall be a partaker of His very life. The hidden waters of your own humanity, in the sealed depths of your own mysterious being, shall be pervaded with the sweetening influences of His perfect humanity. His Cross shall sweeten all. Yea, you shall know that being baptized into His death you were baptized into His life; that He is with you, and shall be in you. You shall be made by Him more

than conqueror; and as He overcame and sat down upon His Father's throne, so, by His might within you, shall you overcome and sit down on His throne: for in the conflict with evil this is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith.

SERMON II.

The Church ordained by Christ to maintain His Conflict with the Special Corruptions of every Age.

EPHESIANS vi. 12.

"We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

WHAT a picture do these words present! What a vision of the world do they set before us! How fitting a beginning for your Lenten meditations!

In the word "wrestle," in the absence of conjunctions, in the repetition of the participles, you see the intensity, the violence, the fearfulness of the conflict. Amid the thunder of the artillery and the crash of the fiery weapons of hell, in the clouds and the thick darkness, you see the Apostle hand to hand, eye to eye, knee to knee, with the mightiest powers of evil; the breath of Satan is on his face, the hosts of wickedness are dashing against him, but he recoils not. Unshrinking, unwavering, immoveable he stands as an adamantine rock. Rather he presses on. He advances without ceasing, he drives back the adversaries, overthrows their legions, storms their strongholds, releases their captives, gathers the accumulating armies of light behind him, and sweeps triumphantly on, as city after city, and realm after realm are freed from their chains of dark-

ness and death, and are brought out by him into the blessed Gospel light, and the glorious liberty of the children of God. What is too hard for him? "I can do all things through Christ." Is he not then a prince, a power, a world-swayer[a] himself; but a prince, a power, a world-swayer of light and life, a centre and concentration of spiritual energies and forces, working not for wickedness, but for good, for redemption and salvation. What a picture, how awful and yet how ennobling, have we here of the world. And is it always so? Is this always the vision of earth? Is earth at all times such a battle-field. Is there "no discharge from this war[b]?" No, brethren, not till the last Advent; not till the last enemy, Death, is destroyed.

This is the preliminary truth which I have now to impress on you, even the enduring conflict of Christ in His Church against sin in all ages, that you may be the more prepared and encouraged, each of you, to take part with Him and fight His good fight of faith against the special forms of sin which abound in the present age.

How then shall I condense the interpretations of the Apocalypse, or the thousand volumes of ecclesiastical history into the brief space of such a rapid review, especially when the visions which we shall glance at are so complicated in their appearance, so difficult to disentangle, until the whole mystery of good and evil is solved? May the Lord assist and guide us in our present meditation.

At the opening of the first seal[c], the commencement of the Christian Church's history, there appears a solitary Rider. He is armed for war; He rides upon a white battle-horse; He bears a bow; a crown is given Him,

[a] *κοσμοκράτωρ.* [b] Eccles. viii. 8. [c] Rev. vi. 2.

a wreath of victory; "He goeth forth conquering and to conquer."

At the close of the Christian Church's history, when the harlot[d] world is fallen and judged, the heaven opens again and the same Rider appears, moving on in His majesty as before, having never ceased from His victorious progress. He is the faithful and the true, who in righteousness judgeth and maketh war.

His eyes are now as a flame of fire; on His head are now many crowns, diadems of empire[e]; His vesture is dipped in blood; they proclaim His name "The Word of God;" and out of His mouth goes the sharp two-edged sword with which He smites the rebel nations; He holds the rod of iron; He treads the winepress of wrath; and on His vesture and on His thigh His name is written, "King of kings and Lord of lords."

He has traversed many battle-fields; He has gained innumerable victories; He has won countless imperial crowns, for from first to last He has been a Man of war; and now He is no more alone, a countless host is with Him, the armies of heaven follow Him, and they all resemble Him. They ride the same white battle-horses; they are clad in the same white vesture; they sweep on with the same majestic and triumphant motion; they have been partners in His strife, they are partners in His victory.

But between these two periods, the beginning and the end of Christ's career, during all that interval in which He is assembling, training, and commanding those armies, the record of His campaigns disappears in great measure from man's view, or is wrapped up in riddle and mystery hard to be read, harder to interpret; "He maketh darkness His pavilion round about Him." "His

[d] Rev. xix. 11. [e] διαδηματα. See Trefich, Synonyms of New Testament.

way is in the sea, and His paths in the great waters, and His footsteps are not known."

Again, the visions which supply the history that fills up this interval between our Lord's two Advents render the review which we have to make yet more difficult and intricate.

There is the Church of Christ, as it is in God's purpose, and as far as it fulfils its calling. There is the Woman, clothed with the sun[f], the moon under her feet, her crown the twelve stars, travailing in child-birth, and bringing forth the Man-child—the Son and Child who rules the nations with the rod of iron; the Rider on the white battle-horse, in His own person, and in all His elect; a Man-child fit to do battle "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

For there before the woman is the dragon to make war against the woman and against her children. Therefore may she bring forth men-children only.

But wings are given her, and she soars away into the wilderness—surely the wilderness of human life, human history—where she is nourished for the time of trial. The Apostle wonders at her—he wonders that such a glorious form should come forth out of fallen mankind.

But how soon has he to wonder again, even with great astonishment. For how soon is there another vision[g]. A woman again; but now become an adulteress and a harlot, seated now on the many waters of humankind, on the scarlet-coloured beast of wickedness, clothed in purple, herself dyed red with the blood of souls—the golden wine-cup of harlotry and apostasy in her hand,

[f] Rev. xii. [g] Ibid. xvii.

the mother of abominations—Babylon. Is it another woman, or is it the same? Do they co-exist? Do they pass the one into the other? Do they both grow together to the harvest? Are they in reality eternally distinct, and yet so strangely intermingled, that man, that angels, cannot undertake the judgment, and the parting asunder: it must be wholly God's.

Observe, too, the evil principles which precede the change from the virgin to the harlot form: first, there is the dragon, the devilish principle of evil; then there is the beast rising out of the waters framed out of all fierce beasts of prey, the bestial or brutal forms of evil, lust, violence, cruelty, unbridled, untameable passion.

Then there is the beast which has the horns of the Lamb, but speaks with the dragon's voice—the beast and false prophet together; the subtler principles or forms of evil; the false Christ; the Antichrist; Satan transformed into an angel of light; his ministers claiming to be, and imagining themselves, ministers of righteousness; wolves in sheep's clothing; those who, if it were possible, would deceive the very elect.

They have the horns of the Lamb—they assume, that is, the claims of Christ, pretend to His authority, His dominion. But their voice, the open or the secret persuasion which they address to the souls of men, is the dragon's voice; temptations of the subtlest but the deadliest kind—excuses, justifications of evil, gloryings in evil as good, high sounding names of philosophy, philanthropy, order, liberty, charity, religious zeal, in which the most fearful crimes are committed, or in which the most perilous venom of unbelief is instilled into the soul, or diffused through the world, impregnating the very air with death. These are the various

shapes and forms of the wisdom that is from beneath, "earthly, sensual, devilish."

Such are the various forces of temptation which from time to time address themselves to the members of the Church of God, either as persecutors from without, or as corrupters from within; and as far as her children are either forced into apostasy, or deluded into error, or entangled in the world by them, so far does "the faithful city become an harlot," and the virgin spouse of Christ is degraded into an adulteress. So far as she resists them and overcomes them, so far does she remain a glorious Church, and wear her sunlike robe, and endiadem herself with heavenly constellations of saints; and so far does she in her travail continually bring forth men-children, Christ, that is, in His true servants, whether men, women, or children, who are firm and unmoved, who are "faithful unto death," who can "wrestle, not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

Let us now follow the forms which the sin that is in the world has necessarily assumed in its conflict with the true Church, and with Christ in His Church, in one or two leading and more general aspects. We can only give a most brief and imperfect review.

Observe, then, how these evil forces form themselves into principalities and powers, and rulers of worldly darkness[h], and spiritual wickednesses in heavenly places.

The base of their operations is the devilish principle of utter and persevering rebellion against God and against all good. It may take the shape of brutal violence, or of foul licentiousness, or of refined selfish-

[h] Κοσμοκράτορας τοῦ σκότους: the τοῦ αἰῶνος τουτοῦ is not authentic.

ness, or of false philosophy, in its assault upon the Church.

See what Christ's servants had to conflict with at the beginning; reproduce the strongholds of evil which they had to assault.

Represent, e.g. to yourselves some Roman amphitheatre; restore in imagination the mighty Coliseum; rebuild its ruined arches tier above tier; fill them with the jubilant populace after some imperial triumph; let senators and knights occupy their solemn post of dignity; let the emperor be enthroned in the splendour of his majesty; let the purple awnings shut out the sunbeams; let luxury pour its odours and perfumes over the artificial airs which fan the hundred thousand spectators. Men, women, and children are there, all ranks and classes gazing with entranced eyes on the spectacle before them. It is impossible to overrate the fascination of the scene to the old Roman heart[1].

And all that scene is full of cruelty and blood, combined with luxury and wantonness. Human suffering, human agony, human death, are its amusement. Then comes the cry swelling up over the whole vast assembly, "the Christians to the lions." The helpless object of universal scorn and hate is to be the last and easiest victim. He enters the arena, to die, but he enters it as "more than conqueror." He comes forth to wrestle against the principality and power of cruelty, the world-swaying spirit of luxurious ferocity, which had throned itself so long in that old Roman world; and it is a battle-field in which he shall triumph. For the Lord is in him; and "the battle is the Lord's." Soon, people, and knight, and senator, and emperor, shall fall before the standard which he bears. The Cross shall be planted

[1] See Augustine and Alypius in Aug. Conf. vi. c. 8.

in the mighty amphitheatre; the gladiatorial spectacles, with their loathsome but wonderful fascinations, shall become abominations. The feeble hand of the dying victim shall pull down this stronghold of the spirits of death, and drive them out of the heart of mankind.

In the idolatrous priesthood and altar, in the Athenian temples[k], the academic gardens, in the cold apathy of the Epicurean, the sneer of the Cynic, the fatalistic Stoic, the various philosophic schools, you see other strongholds of the powers of evil, swaying the world with the darkness of their delusions.

With these also the Christian has to fight: the unlearned with the learned, the weak with the strong, the untrained with the trained, the despised with the honoured, the thing which is not with the thing which is.

Again and again the conflict has to be waged; and many fall on the right hand and the left[l]. But still you see the band of the elect moving as behind the Prince of Martyrs. "Conquering and to conquer:" this is still their character. Still the Church brings forth her male children—aged grandsires, delicate women, tender youths and maidens, but all firm, resolute, unshrinking, faithful unto death, and so mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.

Then before, and yet more after, the victory of Christ over persecution, there came surging up other forms and shapes of evil—enemies different in aspect and different in their manner of war, spirits of fantastic error, dangerous delusion, subtle heresy, numberless and changeful, assuming the name and the claims of the Lamb, but speaking like the dragon to deceive and destroy.

[k] See Greg. Naz. and Basil.

[l] See Cyprian's Ep., *passim*.

You behold them forming themselves into principalities and powers, and world-swaying forces of darkness.

You see some one misapprehension of Scripture, or some one objection to the faith breathed as it were upon the air. It spreads invisibly, and touches heart after heart, and where it rests it infects the spirit. The winds shake it far and wide. Then it gathers round it the pride of the innovator, the tradition of some false philosophy, the spirits of vanity, cavilling, or mockery; the idolatry of reason, the natural rebelliousness of the human heart. Sometimes it arms itself with the authority of the despot, sometimes with the violence of a popular cry; sometimes with the sway of a mighty reaction against some opposite error.

Who shall say when the voice of the people is the voice of God, and when the voice of the devil; who shall say when, in words now floating over England, the world can judge securely, or when the world may be in error[m]? Verily mankind are not infallible. "Let God be true, but every man a liar."

And still the Church brings forth her men-children, her Athanasius, or her Ambrose. The masculine spirits are not wanting to follow Him who is the Truth; to place their feet in His footprints, to be faithful unto death; to defy the despot or the mob, the scoffer or the flatterer; to fight against the world, to uphold the standard of truth at all costs and risk; to go after Him who is the truth through the clouds and thick darkness, and still to emerge, "conquering and to conquer."

Then came the barbaric invasions; the ruin and the rending of the Roman Empire. Afterwards the Mohammedan desolation, and the wild fierce anarchy of the

[m] Augustine's saying, "Securus judicat orbis terrarum."

ninth and tenth centuries which, men thought, could only end with the judgment-day.

But the hour passes, and the earth swallows up the floods[n]; the fixed powers of religion and law gradually absorb the forces of anarchy and desolation. The feudal world comes forth from the waves; column and cloister, and nave, and aisle, and roof, and tower, and spire, and painted wall, and coloured window, it rises up like one of its own vast cathedrals; but behold, the same living powers of good and evil are within it. Christ is there, sin is there, and the conflict is there. It rages with varying violence throughout the whole Church.

The sins of that day, the unbridled and brutal violence of passion, the unceasing feud, the untamed lust, the grasping rapacity, the unmeasured haughtiness, the falsest treachery, the whole evil-beast form of evil, overspread the Christian medieval world.

Amidst them, in the sore battle, the leaders of the Lord's host may still be discerned, but their weapons are too often of a mixed or carnal character.

Sometimes, as in the contests between the Gregories and the Henrys; or later, between the Innocents and Frederics, the right seems partly on one side and partly on the other, or sometimes passes alternately from the one to the other.

Yet upon the whole, now in monk or nun, bishop or priest, now in noble and in king, now in people or in city, you can trace the form and work of Christ, you can see Him sweeping on in His elect. They know not well what spirit they are of, but as the Sons of Thunder who would call down fire from heaven, they have a zeal and love, a power and might by which they wrestle against principalities and powers, and the world-

[n] See Rev. vi.

swaying forces of darkness. They stand front to front, often with too haughty and defiant brows, yet still faithfully, manfully, successfully, against the tyranny, and simony, and bloodthirstiness, and lust, which else would have swallowed up the Christian world in guilt.

And so the contest lasts and the conflict proceeds until modern civilisation and the modern power of law, in the person of Philip Nogaret, grasp the throat of Boniface VIII. at Anagui, and in him strangle that old medieval world, never to rise again. And whether for good or evil, and whether at the hand of Parliament or lawyer, the Church is still writhing in that strong grasp. Then follow the centuries which some have pronounced the vilest and worst since the Christian era[o]. Then the Reformation, and all the mingled consequences which followed out of the prevailing corruption whence it rose. Then the practical infidelity which overflowed in actual crusades against all faith in the time of the great French Revolution, the age, as it has been called, of "light without love."

But all this review, my brethren, is only a preface to the delineation of the present age, and of the conflict of Christ with the sin that is in the world at this present time, which will be set before you in subsequent discourses. Then the dangers of shallowness, and luxury, and superficiality, and the over-worship of the intellect, and the refined impurity, and the idolatry of wealth, and all the other forms of evil which are around you, will be set before you. And wherefore?

That you may choose your part, that you may be upon your guard, that you may follow Christ. And why have we glanced over the record of past ages?

[o] The fourteenth and fifteenth: see Dr. Hook, vol. iii., and quotation from "Dublin Review."

To shew you that there is "no discharge from that war," to remind you that there hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man. There are always many antichrists. Those earthly, sensual, devilish powers of evil are always working throughout the world, always endeavouring to corrupt or destroy the Church. In these days of liberality and comparative quiet our trials and temptations may be of more subtle and refined character; they are no less real, no less searching.

In the customs of society, in the prevalent maxims of the political world, in the voice of the people, in the public press, forces of good and evil continually strike us. A sin is common, then it is glossed over, then made light of, and so it may become a most dangerous tempter, a principality and power of evil swaying the world with its dark ruinous night. A fatal cowardice in Christ's service may take some fair name and aspect, call itself freedom from prejudice, or prudence, or charity. It may inspire the fashionable world, or diffuse itself among the masses. It may gather the powers of the day into its service. It may use the caricatures of "Punch," the polished sarcasm of a "Saturday" article, the learned Erastianism of some clever Quarterly, the ponderous thunder of the leading journal. It may breathe from your pulpits, haunt your universities, sit among your doctors. It may gain fresh might and power day by day. It may eat out the whole heart and life of religion, leaving only its husk and masque.

On the other hand, the living grace of Christ may take similar instruments, and set them face to face and knee to knee against the dread powers of evil who thus swarm over the earth. Out of weakness they may wax strong. By purity, by holiness, by patience, by faith,

they also may disseminate their influences, may use press and pulpit in their Lord's service, may become mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.

The Church brings forth again a man-child, i.e. Christ, in some valiant and faithful servant. He may come from factory, or palace, or college, or cottage. He may gather a little company around him. He may increase his following. He may become a principality, a power, a world-swaying force of light and life. The world for a time may not know him, or may ignore him, or may despise him, but behold there is Immanuel, Christ is in him. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." Yes, it is the Lord who is in His poor servant, and the battle is the Lord's. He opens heaven as it were for a moment, and He appears in His majesty, sweeping on to the mighty consummation, conquering and to conquer. Have not such powers gone forth at various times from this University? It may be they are forming here now.

O how glorious and ennobling is the thought, if we will but receive it. We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Look up! There is the Captain of your salvation. He is mustering His levies. He is summoning us to His side. Do you not hear His voice, "Follow Me:" follow Me in My ceaseless warfare against sin in every shape and under every disguise?

But you must be men to follow Him. The Church owns none but men-children. Whether men or women, young or old, rich or poor, we must be men in understanding, men in resolution, men in decision and unflinching courage, if we would follow Christ.

If we would be champions in this warfare, we must first, after our sinless Pattern, "purify ourselves, through faith unto unfeigned love." We must labour to sanctify ourselves—body, and soul, and spirit. A saintly life is the spring of that understanding, and resolution, and patience in faith without which no one can do anything, much less anything great, in the Lord's service. Then both secretly and avowedly we must join His side. "He that is not with Me is against Me." We must for weal and woe take part with Him. Then we must depend on Him, and be persuaded that without Him we can do nothing; and in that persuasion we must seek in every way for that sacramental union with Him by which we become indeed members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. Then will His strength be ours. What may we not do, then? How closely may we follow Him, how faithfully fight, how patiently suffer, and by suffering overcome.

Does it not seem to you that our dear Church of England is even now putting away the purple, and the gold, and the abomination, and grasping the Cross. In the midst of our troubles and anxieties, in the midst of the darkness and disquietudes which surround us, though "without are fightings and within fears," I think that I behold her rising up in the might of her Lord. The blood may be streaming from her wounds, the gore and dust of the battle may defile her, her head may be dizzy with the sore strokes of the enemy, yet she puts forth even now scintillations of the sunlike glory of love, and saints are clustering round her head, and she is treading this changeful life beneath her feet. She is bringing forth men-children ready for the deadly wrestle, and "the Lord is with them, even He that speaks in righteousness mighty to save." Let us one and all be of those who

follow Him. Let us not think, What can I do? Hearken, brethren and sisters. Was not the world's salvation cradled in a manger? Did it not come forth from the Nazarene cottage? Was not the Church's first foundation-stone taken from the fisher's bark of Bethsaida? Was not the door of faith for the Gentiles opened in the officer's lodgings at Cæsarea? Did not the weaver's loom at Tarsus give us the conversion of the heathen world? Only believe, and all things are possible.

But tarry not. The Lord is always sweeping onward: there is no pause, no rest for us here. Up and be doing. We wrestle not against flesh and blood. It is a noble strife. Defeat is eternal ruin: victory is God's throne. Onward then, my beloved brethren; forgetting the past, reach forward toward the mark.

Soon will the heavens open, and the Lord appear, and all His enemies be for ever fallen. Soon shall we see Him, King of kings, Lord of lords, wearing His innumerable diadems, with a crown too for all who fight His fight, and "who love His appearing."

SERMON III.

The Conflict:—with Shallowness in Religion.

REV. iii. 17.

"And knowest not that thou art poor."

THERE is no utterance, my brethren, amongst these seven voices of the ascended Lord comparable in its utter sadness with this address to the Church of Laodicea. There is not in it one single note of commendation. There is no sound tending towards comfort, save indeed that threatening voice of severe love, which itself is like the hoarse muttering of the gathering storm—"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent."

Now it must be well worthy of our noting what it was which drew from those lips of love this unrelieved condemnation. The features are easily traced out as we look closely into them. Laodicea was the lukewarm Church—"neither cold nor hot." It was—for one metaphor passes easily into another—poverty-stricken in its spiritual life. It was poor. Everything in it was shallow and superficial. This was its character. Further, one fruit of this poverty was its insensibility to its being poor,—"Thou knowest not that thou art poor." Poorness of spirit bred unconsciousness of poverty, nay, even simulated the very thing that it lacked. The shallow water was clamorous in its flow because it was

shallow; the empty, hollow instrument resounded loudly because it was empty. There was a ready superficial show, because there was no depth; the surface-polish hid the degradation of the inward colouring. "Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Against such a character as this it was that the ascended Lord of the Church testifies His utter detestation,—"I will spue thee out of My mouth."

Now, my brethren, setting aside for a little the question what this lukewarmness or shallowness is, in the higher spiritual life of the soul, we are all of us perfectly well acquainted with those whose characters it marks in common life—shallow, surface, outside men. We see on every side the character working before our eyes, with its fixed unity of essence, but with a manifold outward development and form.

We see it in one man in the life of the affections. He is full of a ready, courteous, skin-deep kindliness of demeanour, which reaches down to no self-sacrifice, which implies no wearing anxiety for others, which reveals no deep, disturbing love, perhaps, for any one person upon the earth, nay, which perhaps is thoroughly compatible with absolute cruelty of heart. We read of the most cruel and barbarous judge that ever sat disgracefully upon an English judgment-seat, that he used, in his cups, to run about and slobber one and another of his guests with his meaningless embraces. It is very likely that such a man as this really loves nobody, and that no one really loves him; that he has not that great solid possession, a friend, upon the face of the whole earth; that he is a mere buzzing fly, whirling wearisomely round with other flies, as they accomplish in the

close air of the dusty city chambers their unmeaning, monotonous gyrations.

It is not that he is conscious, observe, of pretending what he does not feel. It is not that. He is not acting the part for an object; that is quite another character, and may be a very deep, though a very false one. This character is one of utter shallowness; it is marked by an essential poverty in the life of the affections. They are called up by the lightest surface-touch, because to them the surface is all. They are mere land-springs of kindness, easy to break out after a summer shower, easy to dry up after a twelve hours' drought. It is demonstration without depth, the brook of shallow love, babbling of its shallowness as it flows.

Here is one of these shallow characters: now look at it from another point, and see it in the life of science. See the poor sciolist, with his ready smattering of all learning, veiling even from himself his universal ignorance. For what worth knowing does the man know? His readiness to acquire and his readiness to produce are of the very essence of his disease. But in his own feeble estimate his smattering is as good as the deepest mine of real philosophic knowledge. He says to himself that he is "rich and increased in goods," and "knows not that he is poor, and blind, and naked" of all real attainment.

Again, you may see the self-same character in the public man. This, again, is one with whom, by report at least, all of you doubtless are perfectly familiar. He is the easy repeater of the watchwords of a party, the retailer of other men's aphorisms, the uncomprehending inheritor of a traditional policy; fluent, perhaps forward, nay, often pertly and most prematurely ready with his judgments and his opinions and his self-importance;

and as shallow as he is ready; yea, as shallow as the brawling rivulet. There is not in this man, perhaps, one atom of real knowledge, one acting of any deep principle which could govern, could strengthen, or could ennoble a public life. Such gnats infest all political life in free countries; they hum everywhere their resounding note of irritating emptiness round the busy, laborious, deep-thinking governors of great peoples.

All this, my brethren, in common life is destructive of everything really great, or generous, or noble, or effective. It is indeed the sure source of men being poor and miserable, and blind and naked. It is a habit of mind fatal to all greatness of conception or efficiency of execution. It can design nothing, for it is incapable of mastering any one real idea; it would burst in the effort. It can effect nothing, for effect is the working out in action of some principle, and it has no principles to work out. This puling, brawling, self-chanting stream can turn no mill, can fertilize no soil, can float no navy: it cannot even make a waterfall: it can but babble emptily to the idle echoes the tale of its own shallowness. The man has no real purpose in life: he does not understand what it is, to have a purpose. Are not, it asks secretly, are not all men and institutions just meant for this and no more—for humming, and buzzing, and talking, and professing, and pretending, and then going out of being like other summer insects, when in spite of all their meaningless activity the terrible winter has come and put an end to them, and their little ways and little being?

This shallowness is just as fruitless in the life of science as in the life of action. It can make no discovery. It cannot lift up knowledge one single step. It does not design to do so, but only to talk about it;

to seem to know about it; to hang upon its march and be powdered by its dust. It can advance nothing; it can produce nothing. The curse of impotence is with it everywhere.

But even more clearly may we see this in the life of the affections. Who, in some hour of crushing sorrow, when the intense longing for sympathy is drying up his inmost spirit, who in such a parched hour would go to one of these surface-streams to cool his fevered being? How nauseous at such an hour are the lukewarm babblings of such a shallow trifler! How far better does every afflicted man feel it, to sit, it may be, in entire silence, grasping the hand of one whose speechless fellowship in grief witnesses that the reality of his loving sympathy is as some vast unborn fountain in its hidden depth; one who, you can feel, suffers with you, who suffers for you, who bows down his naked back to your burden,—than to be mocked in your agony by the endless weariness of a flow of commonplaces!

Here, then, in the ordinary life of this world—having put for the time the higher spiritual world aside—here is this familiar phase of shallowness. And now, how is it to be cured? That is the question for us. How are we ourselves to get free from it? Verily, I think that is a question which a man's soul who is in any way delivered from it must hold at this day to be one of the greatest questions, and most to be put, that can be at all asked. He must often feel it in this present time, with its many shallownesses, to be a question which is breaking forth out of his soul with really passionate earnestness. How are we to get deeper?—deeper in everything? How are we to get rid of this miserable shallowness which is insidiously silting us up everywhere?

But in any measure to cure it, we must have more before us than we have got yet. We must trace the cause of the evil. Now I think it is not difficult to see this, if we will pause for a moment. The master root of this vice is the selfishness of our fallen nature, working under the peculiar circumstances which belong to ease, to abundance, and to a refined and polished civilization. It is the disorder, mark you, of an age of polish and refinement, of an age abounding in material wealth, and self-content in its increasing prosperity. You will observe that this is the very condition of its acting which the Lord sets before us in these words, supplying us with the typical character of the evil: "Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing." It is the inevitable temptation of such an age as this; it is the sin under which it is likely to fall, and by which, if yielded to, all its great works will surely be dwarfed.

The selfishness of barbarism is altogether a different thing. It is a vehement, overbearing, often brutal, selfishness, and for that reason it is closely connected with a strongly-developed individuality of character in different men; and that individuality of character tends directly to deepen while it roughens the soul; and so it is passionate and unsparing both of itself and of others in its love and in its hate. It is profound, robust, outspoken, and from its true manhood not seldom, in hard and fierce and hungry times, is as wonderfully touching in its alliance with tenderness, as it is always grand even in its terrible excesses. But the softnesses of abundance and of civilization change all this. They cannot, indeed, cure the evil; that cure is far out of their reach, but they can modify the outward manifestation of the evil, and they can to a certain extent trans-

form even its inward working. We may trace out, if we will, the very steps of the change. Abundance breeds, wherever it exists long unchecked, an almost tyrannous love of ease. In the estimate of men who have become possessed with this temper, trouble is above all things that which is to be avoided; and this master passion of avoiding trouble inevitably leads to the affections becoming shallow, for nothing is so troublesome as the deep love which forces you to weep with them that weep. As the greatness of true affection possesses a man, so surely there grows up within him a capacity of suffering with others; and on the other hand, as affection dies within any soul, it gets more and more into the condition of that of the barbarous king who sentenced to death any one who appeared in his presence with the sign of mourning, because such a man reminded him in his Sybarite luxury that there were such stern things as sorrow and death. And though this profoundly selfish edict against sorrow is not spoken out, because the speaking it out would now-a-days be troublesome, yet it is there, and it acts only in another form. It exists in the restless, worldly impatience which would force the life-long mourner to lay aside her weeds; it is barely masked in the grimace of courtesy, which in so many well-settled countenances has taken the place left empty by the banished sob of love. And so affection goes; and then high principles go next, for they are eminently troublesome; and a secret compact to exclude trouble begins to pervade all social life, and this soon banishes individuality of character altogether. Men shaken daily together in the vast sack of common respectabilities round off from one another the sharp corners of their individuality, and thus the curse of shallowness is imparted, like some contagious disorder, from

one to another; and all combine to banish, as the source of continual trouble, from their life of painted complacency, deeper and more real qualities. Nor are they without proper arms for doing this—superciliousness, a self-complacent contempt of more real men, and after a while open ridicule or any high and self-sacrificing principle—Esau mocking the child of promise, and when the days of mourning for his father draw on, slaying him or driving him for safety afar off to the distant land. So the evil spreads. Even the young become unreal, unenthusiastic, afraid of the trouble of strong feeling, worldly-wise before their time, jaded and worn out with pleasure even in their spring-time of life. And thus the shallow triumph. Babylon, with her fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and gold, and precious stones, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men, thinketh herself rich, when she is indeed miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.

Here is the working of the evil and its cause; and now where is the cure to come from? Wealth cannot buy it; civilization cannot give it; intellectual power cannot command it. Look at Athens, in the pages of her own contemporary dramatic historians, as they record the daily scene, and see how little the general refinement and civilization of that city could deliver those lords of unsanctified intellect from the desert drought of a heartless, frivolous shallowness. Where then, brethren, where is the cure, against all this degradation of humanity? In the Church of Christ, and in it alone, is stored the sufficient remedy. Between this shallowness and the faith of Christ the conflict is immediate and inevitable; for this shallowness is, as we have seen, the certain impoverishing of humanity, and the faith of Christ is the giving back to it of its original power and wealth. Not

but what it is most true, that within the very circuit of that faith this serpent brood of shallowness lifts up anew its accursed head. The stony-ground hearer, as our Blessed Lord depicts him, is the miserable victim of this evil. About him hangs every sign of this curse of shallowness. There is the seemingly ready reception, with self-conscious gratification, of the Divine message —ready, you will observe, through the utter, unhealed shallowness of the soil upon which the message falls. "*Immediately* it sprang up, *because* it had no deepness of earth." There was no breaking up of the rock of the heart through deep convictions of sin. There was no almost despairing sight of the inward evil. There was no cry from the bewildered spirit, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" There was no crushing conflict between the law of right without and the law of wrong within. All was untroubled ease; poor and faint convictions never thoroughly wrought out into real conversion of the soul to God. In vain for him was the sharp tooth of the law ready to break up the fallow ground of his hardened heart; he shrank from it, and the loving hand of rebuke and chastisement withdrew sadly from the soul the offered gifts of saving severity which would have deepened and renewed it. And so, mark again, the very words of Christ, "he had no root in himself." There was no reproduction in his own individuality of the true type of regenerate humanity, and thus when persecution and affliction arose because of the Word, his love of ease was by-and-by offended, and he withered up, fruitless and self-sentenced from his utter shallowness.

Yet so, believe me, it need not have been with him; so it need not be with any of you to-night. That shallow heart might have been broken up and made to bring forth

fruit unto God. There was ready, first, the Spirit's unerring power to shew him, if he would have seen it, his utter need. The ploughshare would have broken up the rock, if he would have yielded himself to its sharp but blessed work. 'Thou knewest not,' still whispered the inward conviction, 'of all this poverty of thine, this blindness and this nakedness,' and he stopped his ears, because he loved not the sound.

But this was not all from which he turned away. If this had been the only utterance, the man might have sunk in despair; but with it there was this,—"I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed." Here is the cure. In the Church of the redeemed the Lord shews Himself—the God-Man—to each one who will be won to look upon Him and to live. He shews to such a soul in Himself first the perfectness of humanity. He shews him the true form of that which he has lost; the will choosing again at once freely and perfectly; the eye of the Spirit opened; the power of loving which he has stifled within himself; the gift of knowing God and yielding up himself to the unutterable bliss of knowing Him. He shews him the Cross of Calvary, and on it the surpassing sight of human love, pouring out its very life-blood for the sinner's ransom. And when the soul has once understood and taken in that vision, when it has learnt something of the mystery of those words, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me," to what can it turn away? "Will a man leave the snow of Lebanon, which cometh from the rock of the field," that he may turn to quench his thirst at the wayside pool? Will he turn from this sight of the love of the Redeemer to any other portion here? And even this sight of his Lord is not all, for the

Lord of love is not only shewn to the eye, but is given in possession to him who seeketh for it. The Lord imparts Himself to the soul that will receive Him. This is the new life of the regenerate. This is the mystery of the new birth in its perfection, in the soul that follows after Christ. The renewed humanity is imparted from Himself unto each one of His disciples; and each transformed one witnesses to his transformer, witnesses for the work of love and of mercy which has been wrought within him. And so the shallownesses of his nature are swept away by the mighty burst; the rock is struck and the streams flow, and those whom the Lord has healed, witness of that healing to others. The emptiness of fallen man is filled full by the awful indwelling of the Incarnate God; he who erewhile was "naked and miserable" is clothed with "light as with a garment;" and the startling brightness of his countenance witnesses to the wondering crowd of the high communion and of the mysterious indwelling which have been vouchsafed unto him.

My brethren in Christ, this is to-night my witness to you. Though temptations to shallowness abound around you, ye need not be shallow; nay, not one of you need be so. Ye, too, are in the Church of the redeemed; take but the counsel of the Lord to yourself, and He shall work His work within you. Hear Him speak to thee: "I counsel thee to buy of Me." And what is needed to buy of Him? What must the heart be that would make the purchase? What must the shallow soul to-night in this church do, that knows its shallowness, and that cries out against it, would fain have the great depth opened within it, that it may be "filled with all the fulness of God?"

First, you must believe in the reality of the renewed

life. How many fail here! They have got, it may be, far enough in religion to have some sort of half-belief in future redemption, to think that they may be saved at last, but they do not believe that it is God's gift *now*, to those who believe in Christ. They secretly disbelieve in the present power of holy living which God gives to the regenerate. They think that in youth they may give way to appetite, and in middle age to worldliness, and yet that somehow or other, perhaps by the suddenness of a startling conversion, they will be given new spiritual powers, and then all at once begin to be Christians indeed. They live in the perpetual dream that for the present they *must* be shallow, instead of believing in the mighty enfranchisement which the Eternal Son has wrought out for them. Oh, claim it for thyself, and claim it here. Say unto thy Lord, "Thou hast counselled me to buy of Thee all that I lack; Lord, I come to Thee to buy it only with my need, for so shall it be most really Thy gracious gift."

Next, join in desire, join in prayer, join in perpetual aspiration, your present life to the life of Christ. This is the great sacramental mystery of our new being. By the power of the Holy Ghost, Christ will work daily within you, if you will seek His working. You will know for yourself what it is to have within you this transforming presence. All that you long to obtain will follow as the certain fruit of this new knowledge. You will see that you must war against sin, because sin drives away the Presence which is working in you the heavenly work. You will see that there is a power in prayer that will make it precious to you, because again and again it will wake up that life which the Lord is imparting to you.

Only thirdly, seek all this not as a mere apprehension

of the understanding, for that will do no good, but seek it as part of a renewed life. Seek it, my brethren, in giving up more time to prayer. Seek it in striving to have a more continual converse with God, and with Christ, and with the Holy Spirit. Bring in this way the actions of your common life into the presence of the Lord. Mingle aspirations with the doing of common duties. Bring the remembrance of Christ into whatever you are doing, in the shop, the service, the lecture-room, the hour of relaxation. Offer it up over and over again to Him, because the regenerate life is in you; because the Lord is round about you, because His life is streaming into you, because His love is enfolding you, because His Spirit is working within you. Seek it, my brethren, in a life of greater brightness and greater obedience in service. These are the two great secrets of the new life. There must be a brightness of the Divine light cast by Him into your heart, and He will cast it if you seek for it. It is this, and this only, that can overcome the shadows of the earth, and can make you see all things in their true colours, and in their true proportions. And then, besides this, there must be a life of labour. There is nothing which more surely makes the soul shallow, because there is nothing that more kills the life of grace within it, than allowed indolence. It is a creeping mist which, spreading from earth to heaven, dims everything. It sweeps over every part of a life with its blinding presence, making prayer sleepy, making listening drowsy, making God's Word dull, making performance poor. Soon it may be traced in omitted duties, in late hours of morning prayer, in hurried night supplications, in the absence of secret confession of sin to God, in a dreamy unbelief under the voice of absolution. It leads men to put off communi-

cating, to put off self-examination, to put off every act which has in it but the faintest touch of a severer hardness. It leads them wholly to neglect such seasons as Lent, that so they may sleep on undisturbed, to their destruction, through the hours which, used with any earnestness, would of God's mercy bring their souls to salvation.

Oh seek thus, my brethren, your new life in all its true acting from Him, the Lord. Seek from Him that He would clothe you in the raiment of His righteousness. Seek that He would enrich you with the gifts of His love. Seek that He would make you to abound in the indwelling of His Spirit. Let this Lent, let this night, see you seeking Him. Ah, brethren, is the reward not great enough, are not the heavens over us bright enough, is not the promise of life eternal rich enough, to make you give one hour to prayer to-night, to pleading with that Lord of love, in earnest supplication that He would break up your rock-bound heart, and plant in its deepened soil the seed of His eternal life? Surely it is. Try but the experiment, and He will draw thee this night to Himself. New secrets of the Lord shall unfold themselves unto thee; new affections shall kindle within thy soul; brighter light shall pour down about thee; the heavenly raiment shall wrap thee round; and the life that thou now leadest in the flesh shall become the life of Him whom thou shalt know in thy deepening spirit, to have loved thee and given Himself for thee. May God, of His great mercy, reveal this precious truth to many a heart within this church to-night, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost be all honour and glory, world without end. Amen.

SERMON IV.

The Conflict:—with Impatience of Authority.

GALATIANS iv. 26.

"But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all."

IT is worthy of note in the history of the Christian Church, how distinctly we may trace the successive rise of different forms of trial. The conflict between light and darkness is ever varying. It would seem to be the mysterious counsel of God to delay the final consummation, in order to allow every shape of evil to oppose itself in turn, to be counteracted by His truth. Wave after wave of the troubled sea is to break itself upon the Rock. Satan, it was once said, is to be overcome not by the power, but by the long-suffering of God. And doubtless the impotency of the enemy, the inherent weakness of the principle of sin, is hereby more thoroughly demonstrated to the intelligent creation than if on its first appearance it had been instantly by an act of omnipotence trodden out of the universe.

We are to speak to-night of the conflict of the Church in an age of which impatience of authority is one especial feature, and we have selected the text in preference to others which may at first sight appear more to the point, because these words of St. Paul to the Galatians, in their true and false interpretation, go to the

very root of the matter. They occur in the midst of the famous allegory in which he vindicates the freedom of the Christian Church by reference to the history of Hagar and Ishmael, placed in contrast with Sarah and Isaac. Hagar, he says, symbolizing the covenant of Mount Sinai, was a slave, and bore children to live under a yoke of slavery, and she therefore corresponds with the earthly Jerusalem, the material city which now is, and as the metropolis of Judaism is subject to the burdensome ordinances of the Mosaic Law. But the heavenly Jerusalem, that spiritual city of the Lord of which the old town of David was a figure, corresponding (as is not expressed but implied) to Sarah and her child of promise, is free; and this free Jerusalem is the mother of us all, both Jews and Gentiles.

The text, then, is part of an allegorical interpretation of a passage in the Old Testament; and before going on to apply it to the subject of to-night it is necessary to observe two points. The first is this, that St. Paul, when he allegorizes a passage of Scripture, does not think to deprive it of its plain literal meaning. He accepts the story of Hagar and Ishmael as a narrative of facts happening just as they are said to have happened, and thus shews not so much that the story, but that the facts had a deep spiritual significance. St. Paul's exposition, therefore, of this part of the Book of Genesis affords no warrant to any attempt at allegorizing which proposes to get rid of the plain and natural sense of a passage. The second point to be noticed is this, that it is an inadequate conception of this chapter of the Galatians to suppose that it is only an ingenious illustration of the Apostle's argument, not an unfolding of the hidden but intended spiritual sense of the history. St. Paul does not use the history as an illustration of a truth, but de-

rives a truth out of the profounder meaning of the history.

We are therefore to believe, that what St. Paul deduces from this history was intended by the Spirit in prompting the record, intended by the providence of God in the circumstances as they were permitted to occur. When then we, as now, proceed to build upon a sentence of this allegory, we are building upon a very utterance of the Holy One. Whatever be the sense of the triumphant exclamation, "Jerusalem which is above is free," it is the voice of the Eternal Wisdom unto us. The points of likeness and of contrast between the earthly and heavenly Jerusalem were in the mind of the Spirit when the foundations of the terrestrial city were laid. What then, we may ask, is the nature of that freedom of which the Holy Ghost here makes mention? There is a false and a true liberty. Let us try to distinguish between them. Citizens of a city whose builder and founder is God, members of a kingdom erected by no mortal hand upon the earth, we are free—free, we doubt not, in a sense as much higher and more complete than any other, as the kingdom to which we belong is in its origin and its destiny sublimer than any earthly monarchy. Come, then, and let us search into this freedom of the kingdom of the saints.

I. To guard against a false conception of the text.

Now by the term "the heavenly Jerusalem" we may at once understand the Christian Church; the Christian Church not limited to the congregation of the baptized upon earth, but comprehending also the Eternal High Priest who is passed into the heaven. It is a great mistake to regard our Blessed Lord in His session at the right hand of the Father as external to the Church: He is Himself the chief member of it. And so even now

the local position of the Church is not solely upon earth: It is partly in heaven already. There its loftiest ministrations are carried on, in the everlasting presentation before the Father of the glorified humanity of the still Incarnate Son. Just as the holy city upon Mount Sion was the centre of all Jewish worship, as every prayer throughout the land rose upward in the strength of the Temple sacrifices, so the entire worship of the Church Catholic is accepted in connexion with the never-ceasing priestly functions of the God-Man Christ Jesus. The term, then, "Jerusalem which is above," may have its fullest signification in reference to the very height of heaven; but so knit together in Christ are the two worlds, the earthly and the heavenly sanctuary, that as the old Jerusalem fitly expresses the old Israel in all the diverse lots of their inheritance, the "Jerusalem which is above" gathers within the compass of its meaning alike the Holy of Holies where Christ stands ministering, and the outer court in which we His members abide—the mighty fellowship which reaches down from the skirts of His clothing to the lowliest soul which is called by His Name.

And this great fellowship in Christ, this vast community localized at once in heaven and earth, is free—free as the old Jerusalem never was. But how, and in what sense? We here touch the subject appointed for our meditations to-night. Now there can be no question that the one principle which at present pervades society is the principle of freedom. We are not saying that the age is worse than any other, but that it has a special characteristic, viz. a spirit of independence, running like a thread through all the complicate web of its civilization. It is visible in the relationships of life. In the connexion of father and son you may

observe it. There may be, and probably is, as much of filial and parental affection as ever; there is not the same deference on the one side, the same exercise of authority on the other. The current maxims are, that coercion does not answer, that you must guide through the affections and the reason. In the choice of a profession the son chooses, the father is expected to acquiesce in and to facilitate the son's choice. To thwart that choice is considered to be the sure way of inflicting a moral hurt. The frank and hearty yielding of the younger to the elder, as to one endowed with authority in the matter, scarcely finds place in our system. Observe, we are not saying that our system is entirely wrong, that it may not work well; we simply bid you note as fact the independence of spirit manifested and recognised.

Take, again, the instance of master and servant. The authority of the master is narrowed within the smallest limits, and the tendency is to contract it more and more. Just so far as the matter of the bargain between them extends, the master is held to be authorized to exact compliance. But with all that lies without the bargain—the use of the servant's leisure, the wise or foolish expenditure of his earnings, his religious feelings, his pursuits, and habits,—with these things (unless so far as they impinge upon the master's safety or convenience) there must be no intermeddling. Interference here would be an invasion of rights, a wrong to the independence of the individual.

And when we pass from external relationships to mental processes, the same thing is traceable. There is a marked contrast between what constitutes intellectual pre-eminence now and formerly. It is not now the accumulation of knowledge so much as novelty of

conception which wins the greatest applause; not the laying together the multiplied stores of the master-minds that are gone, as the striking out some original invention of one's own. Accordingly, in legislation, in scientific conclusions, in exposition of morals, our age beyond all precedent is loosening itself from the traditions which it inherited, and for good or evil (we say not which) is launching forth upon the ocean of time in the strength of its own discoveries.

And this principle of independence stops not with the things of earth; it runs up into heavenly things also. Is it too much to say that with many who theoretically hold the highest doctrine on Church authority, there is in their very modes of doing good, in their way of carrying out God's work, a wilfulness of thought and action strangely inconsistent with belief in the Divine prerogative of the Church to which they belong to direct and control its children?

And, again, is it not fact that the Christian religion itself is in much of our popular literature, in the view of our shrewd men of the world, passing into a new phase? There is a growing tendency, for example, to exalt the practical commandments of the Gospel while depreciating its doctrinal revelations. You will have the mighty verities of the Incarnation, the Resurrection, the Ascension, treated as the form under which the moral principles to be drawn from them were first introduced to the world, the swaddling clothes in which, in a more barbarous age, new principles of charity and regeneration were fostered into vigorous life, and which may be laid aside when, as now, the human mind has obtained a firm hold of the gracious truths themselves. The independence of modern thought revolts not so much against this or that Creed, as against the defi-

niteness of any Creed. "Jerusalem which is above is free." So, almost as in a burst of song, did the old Apostle triumphantly assert the freedom of Christ, and grasping the divine words in an unsound sense, we have in our impatience of control begun the process of transmuting the Christianity of the past into a new and untried Christianity of the future.

Now that the freedom of the spiritual kingdom is something quite different in kind from that independence which is thus seen to run through our modern system, may be gathered from two general considerations.

First, in marked contrast, stands the personal example of Christ Himself: "He went down to Nazareth with His parents, and was subject unto them." What a marvellous picture of simple obedience are those thirty years of the Holy One in the house of Mary! Conscious of a mission to be the Teacher of the ages for ever, of a wisdom infinitely surpassing that of all with whom He sojourned, sensible, as none other could be, of the false doctrine and corrupt practice of those who were leaders of the people, He abode still in quietness and confidence, as though for the very purpose of stamping on the world's history the truth that that which lies at the root of every movement for good is not a burning zeal or an overflowing wisdom, but the grace of a loving obedience. The larger portion of His earthly life taught that as its great lesson. The after commands to hearken to those who sat in Moses' seat—the repeated assurance that He came not to destroy the law but to fulfil—were but the expression of the doctrine which breathes through the whole of His divine childhood and youth.

2. And very significant also is the second con-

sideration, that the last conflict of Christianity is with equal uniformity declared to be not with cruelty, not with impurity, but with impatience of authority. Who remembers not the warning words, "Because lawlessness shall abound the love of many shall wax cold," so solemnly echoed on by the great Apostle, "Then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord shall consume with the Spirit of His mouth?" Other forms of evil may in turn oppose themselves; the last foe which the adversary will evoke from the pit will be the spirit of independence of authority. We might have fancied that if the conflict were indeed to be intensified amid the deepening shadows of the world's eventide, the latest form of sin would be some abomination, more revolting than any that had preceded. Not so. It is rather as though in the latter days was to be laid bare the master-principle of all sin. All sin, whether it be cruelty, or self-indulgence, or pride, or revenge, involves the contempt of law. These are but the outer guise in which human passions deck out the latent principle. And it is, we say, as if after battling with these, in the final working out of the enmity between the seed of the woman and the serpent, which is the alone key which unlocks the mystery of humanity, the great primary element of evil was to be dragged forth undisguised and uncoloured any longer by lust and passion, and in its own most abstract form to renew the last onset, and furnish forth the last victory of the Eternal Son.

There is, then, a false freedom as well as a true liberty of the children of God. If it be fact, as it doubtless is, that the footsteps of the Son of Man upon the earth, like the advent of the spring, unsealed the closed fountains of intellect, and thought, and will, and caused the

frozen waste of human life to break forth into a fresh luxuriance of all that lifts man in the scale of being; if groundless superstitions and idle dreams of half enlightened minds were intended to dissolve at His light, as the long-coffined tenant of the tomb vanishes into dust at the incoming of the day; if self-government and largeness of mind—all, in short, which constitutes true manliness—should (as we boast has ever been the case) hang like an atmosphere round the Church of God, none the less true is it that there is an impatience of authority, a restlessness of control, with which the same Church has an eternal enmity. There is a freedom which is not the freedom of the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of our God.

II. But now, secondly, to look at the true freedom of Christ's spiritual kingdom. None the less clear than the indications of a lawlessness which He abhors are the intimations scattered up and down Scripture of a liberty which He gives. Such are the words, "If the Son then shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed;" "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free;" and the jubilant cry of the text, the very watch-word of the spiritual Sion, "Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all." We scarcely perhaps realize, now that we have tasted this divine freedom, what a noble promise it was to that old world to which it was first uttered. When our Lord spake of freedom, He stood amid the wrecks of ancient liberty. The soil beneath Him had passed to the stranger, the sceptre had departed from Judah, the iron was eating into the very soul of the people. So was it with those great cities of heathendom in which the Apostle gathered his infant churches. Freedom, it seemed, had come and gone. It was a thing of the past to Athens, and Corinth,

and Rome. And now from the far East, from a land itself conquered and broken, came a voice speaking of a new and indestructible liberty. There was no mention of force, no hint of legislative enactment, no revival of those old fables of the natural equality of all men. Yet was it spoken out, the great promise to that enslaved world, "Ye shall be free." What is this freedom which Christ gave?

He gave freedom to the conscience.

That which the Gospel of Christ aims at is to quicken and purify the conscience, and then to leave it to be the guide of the man. The spirit of our most holy faith is directly opposed to every system which would make a person take his rule without question from another, thereby gradually weakening his own conscience and substituting for it the conscience of that other. Our Blessed Lord everywhere dwells upon the personal responsibility of the individual man to his God alike for faith and action. That wrong is not right because one is so persuaded, that conscience may mislead, this indeed is everywhere recognised. Hence the solemn warning, "Take heed that the light which is in thee be not darkness." Hence the careful rules which the great teachers of the Church have laid down for disciplining the conscience, shewing how every sin defiles it, how every vicious affection weakens its discerning power, how every neglect of its whispers dulls its voice, how God's twofold gift of natural reason and Holy Scripture are equally to be employed in training the conscience for its work. But when this is done, conscience becomes under the law of Christ the sovereign ruler of our actions, the majestic presence of God within us.

Again, Christ gave freedom to the will. It is not with the saints of Christ that they would commit sin, but

dare not, and so that their will is under a perpetual bondage to their fears, but that the faith of Christ and the spirit of Christ so cleanse the thoughts of the heart that the will to sin is supplanted by a better will. The regenerated soul, renewed day by day, wills good, even whilst the rebel angel stands at our right hand, and in his untiring subtlety provokes a fall. There are human laws which are no yoke to us simply because we have no inclination to the offences which they forbid, whilst to those in whom the desire exists they are a heavy bondage: the law against theft is oppressive only to the thief. Just so is it with the disciple of Christ. It is because the religion of Christ stops not with reforming the outward action, but goes to the renewing of the heart, kindling within the deep of the soul the love of purity in those who are to be pure, the love of worship in those bidden to worship; therefore by enlisting the affections on its side, it frees the will.

We might multiply instances of the freedom of Christ, this liberty of the heavenly city. We might shew you how indeed God's revelation, when heartily embraced, so far from shackling the reason, sets it free, by regulating the passions, moderating the prejudices, liberating us from the slavery of human leadership, rendering more single and more sublime the desire of truth. Yea, and there is a darker dread still from which Christ alone makes us free. What of those of whom it is said that all their life long through fear of death they are subject to bondage? Indeed, indeed there is nothing but an abiding faith in the reality of His eternal life within the veil, His presence with the departing soul as the light of earth fades out and the dark valley closes around, which can wholly take the victory from the grave. Scepticism may generate indifference, physical

courage may prevent childish terrors, necessity may produce submission, but the entire freedom of the human spirit at the hour of dissolution, in the calm earnest hope of a labour ended and a reward at hand, in the felt consciousness of being near its true home, belongs only to those who are sharers in the heavenly citizenship.

We do not then strip such passages as the text of a full, deep meaning when we warn you against the spirit of impatience of authority. There is a freedom of the children of God, distinct from an uncontrolled licence of speculation, distinct from the conceit of an unbridled will, distinct from an independence of ancient habits of thought and practice, a liberty which beginning now in purified affections, and a conscience heedfully moulded by the law of Christ and the spirit of Christ, shall find its full consummation hereafter in the complete identification of the will of man with the will of God, in the greater life that is yet to be in the innermost courts of the Jerusalem which is above.

Men and brethren, if we would rejoice hereafter in the full freedom of the heavenly city, it must be by the exercise of submission here. "All of you be subject one to another." It is as if submission had in itself a force to train and discipline the human spirit. Even so. The seat of law, it has been said, is the bosom of God. On the other hand, impatience of control finds its primal type in the mystery of Satan's fall.

SERMON V.

The Conflict:—in a Luxurious Age.

EZEKIEL xvi. 48—50.

"As I live, saith the Lord God, Sodom thy sister hath not done, she nor her daughters, as thou hast done, thou and thy daughters. Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before Me: therefore I took them away as I saw good."

IN the week when the Church hath appointed the awful history of the sin and destruction of Sodom to be read as one of the special lessons from the Old Testament, in the ears of all the congregations of the people, it may be well for us to bear in mind the beginnings of her sin as they are detailed in the passage before us.

The beginnings of the sin of Sodom, then, were these: pride, plenty, and that indisposition to work which is the accompaniment, too often, of fulness of bread; and with these seems to have been joined—or out of them rather to have flowed—indifference to the sufferings of the poor,—"Neither did she strengthen the hands of the poor and needy."

Now it needs but a few words to remind any thoughtful person among us that certainly pride, fulness of

bread, and abundance of idleness, are still producing their bitter fruits among the nations of the earth. Who is there among ourselves that ever speaks of his nation without using terms of unmeasured self-satisfaction and pride? Her institutions, her commerce, her power, her wealth, her freedom, as compared with that enjoyed by other nations; the extent of her dominion; her exhaustless resources; her insular position, as securing her safety and independence; the races from which her people are sprung, as tending to the formation of a hardy and enterprising character; peculiar qualities for which they are remarkable; the effect of her system of law and government upon the different classes of men within her borders; the absence of causes which might disturb her tranquillity, when other nations are distracted with war, or have the elements of confusion within them,—all these form so many exhaustless topics of self-gratulation, when statesmen and legislators, princes and nobles, men of wealth and position or eminence, aye, even when men less esteemed than these address a multitude on any occasion. It seems as though no other topics but these would ensure a hearing, or that whatever else has to be said afterwards cannot be received without this tribute first paid to the pride of the nation. Now surely sayings like these, continually repeated, can have but one effect on the national heart. And when men go forth from hearing such words as these to their daily labour, or business, or pastime, as the case may be, how can it be but that they carry with them the impression of this power and greatness? And it is this which is now plainly portending, at some future time, the disturbance of our tranquillity; when the meanest of the people shall take up a parable against their betters, and a taunting proverb against them, and

say, "Whence have ye this wealth, all ye that dwell in ceiled houses, but from our labour? It is not yours, but ours, acquired by our toil, and we will have our full share of the proceeds thereof. Wo to him that increaseth that which is not his!" The beginning of this discontent is even now seen and felt among us, and no man knows to what height even of violence it may proceed. But for all this the voice of pride is not silenced. The vainglorious boasting continues. The vanity of the lowest of the people is especially flattered, as though the wisdom of our wise men had perished, and the understanding of our prudent men were hid.

Meanwhile there is also fulness of bread; and this not equally distributed, but want and cold and nakedness, side by side with profusion and great luxury. And the same effect on many hearts is discernible as was condemned in Sodom and her daughters: "Neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy;" literally, "did *not lay hold of the hand* of the poor to lift him out of his degradation and wretchedness," which may seem a hard thing to say when there are laws to protect them that are starving in the land. But still how many thousands of instances are there of that indifference to suffering, which God condemned by the Prophet Amos in them

> "That lie upon beds of ivory,
> And stretch themselves upon their couches,
> And eat the lambs out of the flock,
> And the calves out of the midst of the stall;
> And invent to themselves instruments of music;
> That drink wine in bowls,
> And anoint themselves with the chief ointments:
> But they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph."

Great luxury is great selfishness, disguise it as you will; and selfishness is regardless of the want and misery

and privation of the poor, which it does not see or consider, but turns away from it as a pain from which we naturally shrink, and straightway seeks forgetfulness in its accustomed delights. And when many in a nation are so living—deadening their moral sense, their sense of the beauty and perfection of God's works, in their own selfish enjoyment; averse to labour, and lost to the exercise of their nobler energies by reason that what they want—yea, more than that, almost everything they wish for—comes readily to their hand; the inventions of things that minister to pleasure and ease and indolence are so many; the appliances of art to the uses of daily life seem to outrun the very demands of our wants, even when sharpened by all manner of artificial indulgences;—when many are so living, even though they so live in private, out of sight and observation, yet doth the rumour of this ease which they enjoy, spread abroad by a thousand channels unknown to them, and disturb the minds and stir up the imaginations and awaken the desires of them that hear, of some that have witnessed in part, or have ministered to, this hidden sensuality.

Then comes that further consequence of such a social condition as has been described—*abundance of idleness*, indisposition to labour; which likewise spreads wider and more rapidly than we think; infects the hearts of them whose labour maintains the state of the world, and whose desire ought to be in the work of their craft. The importance of their diligence in the work to which they are called is very forcibly stated in the Book of Ecclesiasticus: "All these trust to their hands; and every one is wise in his work: without these cannot a city be inhabited; and they shall not dwell where they will, nor go up and down." Such are all they who eat their

bread in the sweat of their brow; the tillers of the ground, the mechanics and artizans, the smiths and the carpenters, the masons, the workers in brass and iron, and those whose work lies in mines and underground—the great labouring community in our land. But the wealth to which their labour has contributed so largely, and the fulness of bread and luxury which has grown out of it, and the desires which these have given birth to, and the indisposition to manly exertion which is the sure accompaniment of appetites fed and pampered, has extended to them also. They consent no longer to the laws of primitive society, nor are their wants simple and few, as were the wants of their forefathers, but they must go up and down, and have leisure as others; and with the opportunities for recreation and for mental culture which have been liberally afforded them, has come at last upon them also the desire for abundance of idleness, which went together with wealth and luxury in the cities of old; which brought the vengeance of fire on Sodom, and the sword upon Tyrus and Egypt, and upon Jerusalem, the chosen city, to whom the warning in the text was given, desolation and contempt of all her enemies round about her, till at length God took her away as He saw good.

Such is the age, brethren, in which our lot is cast, to take our part according to the stations we are respectively called to fill, in maintaining the faith of Christ and the practice of Christian men amidst spiritual dangers and temptations which have had their parallel in the history of other nations, but are more to be dreaded for their issues in these, the latter days. For it must be remembered that the conflict is now between the faith of Christ—confessed and admitted to be the only victory which can overcome the world—and the world,

with all her weapons sharpened by previous conflicts, her prince having great wrath because he knoweth that he hath but a short time; many men of intelligence too, professing the service and discipline of Christ, not at one with those servants of His, who perceive the real greatness of the issue; but who would fight against the evils which they can but perceive and acknowledge with weapons not proven, trusting to the spread of civilization and intelligence rather than to the faith of the Gospel. For they shrink from driving to extremes, as they call it, many well-meaning and well-disposed men, who cannot altogether see the spiritual dangers of the time as we see them; who indeed, if not urged unduly, may be useful helpers unto building up the wall of the temple of God which is fallen down, in these troublous times. That is the language of some who hold the faith of Christ but weakly, are not penetrated with that inner sentiment of love for the person of the Redeemer which flows out of right belief in His accomplished work, but rather admire and reverence and adore Him as a hero than love Him as St. John loved Him, who testified so truly that marvellous love: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

But now, brethren, from these more general considerations of the state of the world and the awfulness of the conflict that is to be waged between the powers of darkness and the Prince of Light, let us examine the nature of the conflict in the scene where it is to take place, i.e. in the heart of each individual man. Let us hear St. Paul—one of the conquerors—attesting how he won the victory: "I am crucified with Christ," he writes to the Galatians, "nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh

I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." And again, at the end of the same letter, he declares himself to glory in nothing but the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, "by whom," he saith, "the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." And a few years afterwards, after a few more years of conflict such as flesh and blood has seldom waged before, he announced to his own son in the faith, his fellow-labourer and fellow-sufferer Timothy, that the conflict was over, that the victory was won; that God had brought him at last nearly to the haven where he would be: "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." Now the perils which St. Paul encountered were wholly different in kind to those which we may be called to encounter—sufferings, privations, tortures; but of whatever kind they be, the conflict is in the heart, between the Spirit of Christ dwelling there and the fear of the world or the love of the world attempting to dethrone and expel that Spirit. You that are here in the early vigour of your mind and body, preparing for the great work of life on which you are soon to enter, are beset—not continually, so as to open your eyes to the danger in which you stand, but occasionally in an hour of weakness, in a moment of thoughtlessness, when you are least prepared for it—by some temptation congenial to your age, to your circumstances in life, to your peculiar temperament or disposition. The general ease in which you live, the pleasantness of life as it comes ordinarily to men of your age and station, the abundance of meats and drinks, the multitude of appliances with which all

your wants, bodily or mental, are speedily supplied, the natural cheerfulness of your companions, the flow of youthful spirits in yourselves, the ignorance of impending care or trouble, the inexperience of such issues, the tone of the lighter publications which you continually read, the pride and self-satisfaction of this high civilization with which you are surrounded, the concealment of its evil, and the ostentation of its goodly promise, the softness, the freedom of going to and fro, the facilities of all things needful or naturally agreeable to your physical frame, are powerful incentives to cherish a suggested imagination of evil. Supposing it to be frequently present; supposing it to find you at some moment more than ordinarily weak, or susceptible of an evil influence, no position more difficult for flesh and blood can be imagined.

But there is something which renders the position of one so tempted still more critical. He has been made aware that among those whose good opinion he respects and covets, among the tutors and governors he is under, though one and all would give him the same counsel, with the same solemn earnestness and love, "Flee from that temptation as you would from a pestilence; resist, and overcome,"—yet hath he been made aware by the same subtle spirit who overcame our first mother in the garden, that some of the terrors with which the law of the Lord encircles such actions as that to which he is now tempted, are regarded by persons of no mean authority as unnecessary inferences from the Word of Scripture; that though to yield to such a temptation is undoubtedly both wrong in itself, and might lead to graver consequences, and be even (taking it at the worst) the beginning of ruin, yet that ruin itself is not irreparable, not everlasting. Books have been written

to shew that the idea of everlasting punishment is not reconcilable with belief in an All-merciful, All-wise, and All-powerful Being. And the temptation is strong, and the flesh is weak. One of his tutors has seen his ways, and counselled him, aye and prayed for him, lest he should be entangled in sin or evil compliances; yet that one, he knows, holds a view of the Divine dispensation which others do not hold. Perhaps he begged him during this Lenten season to set his appetites under some restraint, to use moderation in diet, more frequent prayer; but others (he knows) pay no regard to such rules, and declaim against the use of them. At any rate, he has not done it; and altogether the man vacillates, stumbles, is made weak. What is to sustain him? Awake, awake, oh! arm of the Lord; awake, as in the ancient days, as in the generations of old! Art thou not it which hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon? Strengthen the soul of Thy servant, for unto Thee does he lift up his soul! From amidst the enervating tendencies of a luxurious age; from these acting upon a heart easily influenced from without, not watchful over itself, which has been led to doubt and question concerning the terrors of the law; from the pressure of his present temptation, doth this young man, for whom even now a father's or a mother's prayers are daily offered, flee unto Thee to hide him! And now the conflict is at the sorest; but then is the power of the Lord the strongest to help us against the adversary. We know not the secret strivings of the Spirit of grace in the heart. We know not (perhaps even when we were tempted, we knew not so as afterwards to recollect them,) the Divine dissuasives from the evil course which was open to us to follow; the fears that were awakened within us; the insensible guidings of our feet into a

place of safety; the power with God of the fervour with which we prayed, "Keep Thy servant, O Lord, from presumptuous sins, lest they get the dominion over me." Still less do we know the prevailing intercession offered for us by the Son and by the Spirit, still less the power of the angels which in heaven behold the face of the Father. But in that tempted heart, there was the principle of faith in which he had been brought up,—faith in the Son of God who loved him, and gave Himself for him; there was the felt attraction of the Cross of Christ drawing him even then unto Himself; the Hallelujahs of Easter, as he had sung them in his childhood, seemed to echo through the darkness,—

> "Who endured the Cross and grave,
> Sinners to redeem and save."

The youth was not left alone to struggle against the overwhelming force which Satan had arrayed against him, or to stand in his own strength against the corruptions of a luxurious age; but as he passed through the fire of temptation One walked ever at his side, though not revealed to human view, even as when Nebuchadnezzar beheld those three men on whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed; and lo! a fourth person was walking with them in the midst of the fire: and the form of the fourth was like the Son of God.

But it is not so much the violence of some one powerful temptation, to which we become exposed when we least expect it, by some concurrence of the circumstances in which we live,—it is not this so much as the general effect of a tone of pride and gratulation, of plenty of all things necessary for the body, of pleasure, of amusement, of prosperity in business, of the idleness to which

this abundance of gratifications of the sense and the mind naturally predisposes us, with which we must remember that we have to wage an incessant conflict. And as warriors in the field are not always fighting, but only when the assault is made, but are always watching lest they should be taken at a disadvantage, so it must be with the soldiers of Christ. They must watch against the encroachments of the spirit of a luxurious, i. e. a self-pleasing, self-satisfied, indolent age, upon their faith; upon their faith in an unseen God, ordering all these outward things so as to work out a future development of His glory; upon their faith in a great salvation to be wrought out for themselves and all their fellow-sinners; upon their faith in the presence of the Saviour through the indwelling of His Holy Spirit in our hearts,—I say upon their faith in these hidden mysteries, which are greater wonders than all that we see with our eyes.

If the dangers of the age be what have been described, we must seek our safety in cultivating the opposite dispositions to those to which we are persuaded. First, we must be on our guard against the suggestions of pride and self-complacency, by endeavouring to form as humble an estimate as possible of our own powers and works, and use of the blessings and advantages we enjoy. For remember we cannot better the world but by bettering ourselves. We cannot put down the pride of the generation in which we live, but we can mortify our own. If we excel in anything, we can say to ourselves continually, "What hast thou which thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" We can follow the wise precept of the Apostle, "Let nothing be done through strife and vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."

Secondly, in regard of that danger which arises to the soul from living in plenty and abundance, we can regulate ourselves in our use of meats and drinks, and personal indulgence, practising at certain times a holy moderation and abstinence, that we be not overcome of such delights. And as a safeguard to ourselves in this matter, let us remember the poor. It is to be noticed in many that are rich and affluent, that though they are kind and tender-hearted persons, and when any distress is brought before them, ready to relieve it, yet they are for all that selfish in their enjoyments, profuse in what they lay out on themselves, by reason that they do not consider the case of the poor and needy. It is not brought before them except perhaps in some case of obtruded misery, itself the punishment of sin in the sufferer, exaggerated and decked out in order to deceive; and when they relieve it, their desire is rather to get rid of the painfulness of the object, and so to save themselves, than to be justly charitable. And they are not at the trouble to enquire how many close at hand are enduring cold and darkness and privation, when they have warmth, and light, and abundance of all things richly to enjoy. This was the sin of Sodom, this was the sin of Jerusalem, which came to its height in the days when the Son of God reproved the covetousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, and most of all reproved them for this, that the widow and the fatherless found no mercy at their hands. It may be said that in our nation no sooner is a case of real suffering made public than contributions flow in on all sides; and yet do our public prints reveal, almost daily, abuses of the very law by which we provide for poor and indigent persons,

which ought to bring to our remembrance more keenly than it does that cumulative sin of Sodom and her daughters, "Neither did she strengthen the hands of the poor and needy."

But thirdly, in regard of the disposition to abundance of idleness, which is increasing, I believe, daily, to which all the incidents of our national prosperity minister, and which must in the end issue in the disturbance of our tranquillity, it is not that you here can do anything to stem that torrent of self-indulgence which is flowing in upon us, especially in the lowest orders, whose tastes are the coarsest, and whose wills through ignorance are the most perverse; but you *can* resist the tendency to it in yourselves; you can endure this hardness at least, of girding up your loins to do the work which God has appointed for you in the world, as men who believe that it is their duty, required of them by the laws of true religion and sound morality. That precept "to endure hardness" is illustrated by St. Paul by the example of soldiers, because of them was necessarily required the endurance often of physical pain and suffering; and it has a further illustration beyond that, from their whole course of discipline as doing day by day the things commanded them. You, my younger brethren, in proportion as you faithfully, with perseverance and denial of your natural inclination to idleness, (fostered by the circumstances in which you live,) do every day's work carefully and diligently,—are forming in yourselves, even here, in the course of those studies which some despise as not being likely to be of use to them in after-life, the character for vigour and industry, which will be of the greatest use to you in after-life; but more than this, a principle which will be a safeguard to you against the dangers of luxury when they

may beset you hereafter in a much more formidable shape than you have yet experienced; nay, more, a principle which may constitute some of you hereafter—whether as officers of state or as ministers of God's Word and Sacraments—both wise in counsel and high in national esteem, so as to give weight to those counsels; as some who have been educated in this place have been and now are bulwarks and safeguards of our national truth and honour, who if they had yielded to the fascinations of pleasure, to the mere love of pastime and amusement, to the dulling and deadening effect of fulness of bread and idleness, might have been utterly unprofitable, even as the salt which has lost its saltness, good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men.

SERMON VI.

The Conflict:—in a Luxurious Age.

PHIL. iii. 18, 19.

"Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things."

CAN there be any one here who is an enemy of the Cross of Christ? Is any one of you against Christ? Would you stop His work? would you drive the thought of Him out of your own hearts? would you prevent Him from winning the hearts of others? Is His claim upon you so great that you cannot bear it? When you hear of His death upon the Cross for the sin of man, is the thought of that death a trouble to you? Would you rather get rid of it? Would you rather that He had never died? Which side are you taking in the great battle that is going on between the powers of heaven and the powers of hell? For more than eighteen hundred years Christ has been going forth conquering and still to conquer. By His Cross and by His grace He has been bringing hearts and wills, souls and bodies, that once rebelled against God, back to a true obedience to God. He goes forth still to fight the same mighty battle. Is there any one here who is fighting against Him? Is there an enemy of the Cross of Christ amongst us?

No, it cannot be. You were signed with His Cross and marked for His own at your baptism. Your whole hope is in His Cross. From your first years you have been taught the deep love of Him who died on the Cross for you. You know how sharp were the sufferings that He bare for you. You know well what pardon and grace He so dearly bought for you. You feel that you owe yourselves to Him. You love, you adore Him. You have knelt and prayed to Him to-night. You have said that you believed in Him. You could not be His enemies, the enemies of Him who loved you better than the heaven He left for your sakes, better than His own life which He gave up in sacrifice for you. I ought to be ashamed even to suggest that any one of you could be an enemy of the Cross of Christ.

Ah, brethren, brethren! turn back from those high thoughts, from those confident words, to the sad sentence which St. Paul weeps forth in the text. What is it that he tells us? "Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ." Even in his days —even in the first and purer days of the Church, in the midst of the warmth of the fresh love of the first Christians—there were "enemies of the Cross of Christ." The message of the Gospel was new then to the ears of men. They had not had time to grow used to it as we have. The wondrous sweetness of its music had not worn off into an old familiar strain that men listen to mechanically. Those marvellous truths of the deep love of God for Christ's sake, of the deep love of Christ in dying to bring men back to God, had opened upon men whose early life had been spent in all the misery and wretchedness of heathenism, or in the bondage of the law. And yet, even then, amongst those very men

whose new-found joy and peace should have bound them heart and soul to the Lord who died for them, there were "enemies of the Cross of Christ." Nay more, there were not only one or two, a few rare instances of men whose hearts were harder than the rest. It was a common case. Neither had these men fallen only for a short time. They must have gone on perseveringly in their resistance to the Lord, for the Apostle had *often* spoken about them. Neither can we think that they had been without warning. How do the words of St. Paul seem to bring up before us the long and loving warnings with which he had sought to move their hard hearts! How do they express the sad remembrance of the Apostle's fruitless efforts to awaken these men's souls to a sense of what they were doing! How do we gather what he must have done for those backsliders, when even in writing about them his eyes fill with tears, and he says, "*Many* walk, of whom I have told you *often*, and now tell you even *weeping*, that they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ!"

And if this was so *then*,—if even when apostles taught and warned, if even in times when all the fervour of a new faith, and all the warmth of grateful love might well have kept men true to their Lord; if, even then, there were many enemies of the Cross of Christ,—how is it now? Can we be without fears? Can we make sure that none of you are ranging yourselves against your Lord?

We dare not think so. We must fear for you, and this the more because the very temptation which made men enemies of the Cross of Christ is so strong in our own day. See what the Apostle says was the character of those who were enemies of the Cross of Christ in his day: "Their god is their belly, their glory is in their

shame, they mind earthly things." This shews us what it was that had stolen their hearts away from Christ. They had put self in the place of their Lord. They had sold heaven for earth; and they were priding themselves on the very things that ought to have made them hide their very faces for shame. Renegades and apostates from Him who had bought them, body and soul, no wonder that they were enemies to His Cross. What did the Son of God claim of them by His Cross? On the Cross He had died for them. They were members of that Church which He had purchased with His own blood. What had they been without the Cross? Lost, stained with sin, alienated from God. What had they gained through the Cross? Pardon, peace with God, grace in this world, the hope of glory in the life to come. What had God the Son given to gain this for them? He had given all He had, and all He was. He had offered Himself without spot to God in the unswerving obedience of a life of bitter trial, in the awful anguish of a death of shame and agony. He had paid down the price of His own precious blood, of His body and soul, of Himself, God and Man, to make their peace with God. They could not but feel what a claim this gave Him upon them. If He had not died they had been dead before God. They lived only through Him. To whom, then, could they belong? To themselves? No: they were not their own; they were bought with a price, they were bound to glorify God in their bodies and in their spirits which belonged to God. Every power of their minds, every faculty of their bodies, should have been used in His service. They should have lived only for Him who died for them and rose again. Their one aim and object should have been to please Him.

And what were they doing? Their "*god was their belly.*" They pampered and indulged the body. Their chief thought was how to minister to their appetites. They made eating and drinking a study. They did not eat to live, but they lived to eat. And they set their "*mind on earthly things.*" All high hopes and aims faded away from before them. The sight of their souls was bounded by this world. They lived in this world as in a home, and so they gathered about them all that might make this home full of comforts. They were bent on making this life smooth, and soft, and easy. And they gloried in their shame. They exulted as they succeeded in their plans for self-enjoyment. They did not feel that feasting without restraint, and a life frittered away in empty frivolity, and a body weakened by excess, and a mind given over to the vanities of this miserable perishing world, are a shame to one who bears the name of Christ. They prided themselves on these very things, on their well-spread tables, on their crowds of guests, on their well-invented comforts, on the show they were able to make, on the wonder and admiration and envy which all their display excited in the minds of others. They clothed themselves in the pomp of the world, and forgot that these very pomps were their deepest disgrace. And so they became enemies of the Cross of Christ. They witnessed against Him whom they professed to follow. They made the world despise Him. They not only turned their own backs upon Him, but they hindered others from seeking Him whose love and grace seemed to have no power over the hearts and lives of His followers. Yea, it may be even further, that they hated the very Lord who had died for them. All that He had done for them was a reproach to them. His claim on their service galled them and fretted them.

The memory of His cross and bitter pangs broke in on their soft, luxurious lives and reproached them. The worn and wasted figure of the Man of Sorrows hanging on the tree rose before their minds in such sad and startling contrast with their self-pleasing lives that they hated the very thought. And so, it may be, they grew into hating Him,—Him who had been all love to them, to whom they owed all, who was all in all to them. They became the enemies of the Cross of Christ.

Is there no warning for us here, my brethren? Is there no special warning for you, my young friends, who live in this place? Ah! I speak with the memory of old Oxford days and scenes rising up before me, with the tenderest sympathy in all your difficulties, knowing well the snares that lie round you on every side; and I implore you to think whether you are being drawn away from the love of Christ into the band of those who are enemies of His Cross. It is not one snare, but many, that are laid for your souls here. There are snares for the body and for the mind. There are temptations to idleness, aimlessness of life, impurity, pride, unbelief, scepticism, contempt of authority. Some, or all of these, threaten your souls. By the grace of God any one of these temptations may be the occasion of a victory and a crown to your souls. But the dangers are great; and of all the dangers that beset you, perhaps no one is more subtle than the temptation to a soft, luxurious, self-pleasing life. Yet surely there never was a time when luxury was more widely spread than it is in these times of ours. In what point are we safe from a temptation to those forms of luxury which made Christians enemies of the Cross of Christ when St. Paul wrote?

Their God was their belly: alas! might not this be said of too many amongst ourselves? Look at the sums

that are spent upon mere eating and drinking; only remember how rare and choice delicacies are hunted out, invented, and provided for our tables; see how men vie with one another in the splendour of their entertainments: is it possible that this can have any other effect but that of lowering the tone of the soul? When so much time and care is given to indulging the mere, lower animal nature, is it likely that the spirit will be free to live to God? Will it not be clogged, and dull, and heavy? Then add to this the numberless other forms in which luxury shews itself. Walk down the streets of this or any other of our larger towns, and see how every thing is offered for purchase that can minister to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. Go into any of the homes of the rich, and see how comforts are heaped up on every side, until almost all forms of suffering are shut out. Mark how the rising generation, with all the affectation of greater manliness of which we hear so much, grows more and more dependent on comforts that our fathers still despise. See how the hours of amusement are prolonged further and further into the night, and how, as a natural consequence, the hours of the services of the Church are pushed so far on into the day, that what we call our morning service has become really a noon-day service. Or again, think of the eager rivalry with which one class imitates the amusements and aims at the enjoyments of the class above it. Is not all this "a minding of earthly things?" Is it not a going aside from the great object of life? Is it not sure to tend to a forgetting of the soul, of heaven, of God? Must not prayer be pushed out of its place when the time is so filled up with a ceaseless round of wild gaiety? Can a man take a calm steady view of his heart in the midst of all this dissipation? Will he

not be too likely to shrink from the receiving of the Holy Communion, while he feels that he has been living apart from God? In the midst of such constant self-indulgence will not his soul lose all force and vigour? Will one who lives always at the extreme point of what is just allowable be likely not to overstep even the broad bounds of a lax life when the trial comes? Alas? It is but too sure that all habits of self-denial and restraint must be broken down by such continual ease and softness. The soul that is so seeking itself waits only for the call to suffer, to become the enemy of the Cross of Christ.

And then, see further, how the whole tone of society encourages and helps on this self-pleasing and luxurious temper in us. All around us men are striving to be first in the splendour of their homes, in the daintiness of their fare, in the number of the guests that they can crowd together in some monster entertainment. We hear them speak with eagerness of the discovery of some place at which the rarest delicacies can be got. They boast of the sums which they give for pictures, for ornaments, for the furniture of their rooms. They pride themselves on the costliness and richness of woman's dress. What is all this but to glory in their shame? For what can be a greater shame to a Christian than to be thus following after the world which he has renounced? What greater disgrace can there be for any one of us than to be lavishing on ourselves the whole of the wealth that God has given us, or at least so large a proportion of it that only the meanest fraction is left to be spent for the honour of God and the good of our neighbour? What can be worse than to be aiming thus to fix the eyes of men upon ourselves, instead of upon God? It is bad enough to be gods to ourselves, to make one's whole life

one eternal seeking of self, to live as if one was only in this world for one's own sake, to throw away the strength of the soul's best energies on one's self, to hope, to desire, to long only for what pleases one's self; it is horrible for one who was made by God, and for God, thus to blot God out of his mind, and to set up self as the god for which he lives. But it is worse to make one's self, as far as one can, a god to others, to make one's self a mark for all eyes, to attract notice, admiration, envy to ourselves, to live as if we were ourselves the centre of all creation; to expect all things and persons to minister to our greatness and enjoyment; to desire to be a kind of golden idol for men to wonder at: to draw away, as far as we can, the hearts of men from God, and from what pleases God, and to make them long to be as rich, and as much surrounded with worshippers, and as much sought after as we are. To do this is indeed to glory in our shame, to be a rebel in the world of God, and to boast of setting one's self before Him.

What must be the danger then to our souls, when it is not one or two only who are living thus, but when this luxurious, self-seeking, God-denying life is so common? Not one or two only so disgrace their Christian calling, so that we shudder at the rare case of a luxurious life, but "many" so "walk." It is not as if now and then we came across such men, and felt at once the corruption of their ways, as one might pass from the pure, clear air, into some fever-stricken home, and feel the danger of infection from its close, polluted atmosphere. We live in an atmosphere of pollution. We live in an atmosphere of low, worldly, debasing luxury. Too many of those around us profess to believe the Gospel, and yet contradict its principles by their lives. They are enemies of the Cross of Christ: they will have

nothing to do with the fear of sin, nor with shame, and sorrow, and penitence, and self-denial, and suffering for the sake of others, and self-sacrifice, and the single devotion of the soul to God, which all spring out of a real faith in Christ sacrificed for our sins on the Cross. They throw off all these tempers of the Christian mind. And they do this, not shrinkingly, with fear, and shame, and a sense that they are sadly inconsistent, but boldly, openly, and unblushingly. "They glory in their shame."

And how then are we to stand against the temptation of falling in with this tradition of men, which threatens to make the Word of God of none effect?

There are, dear brethren, two great safeguards, and both are suggested to us by what St. Paul says. The first is this,—Remember the *end* of a luxurious life. St. Paul tells us of these men, against whose lives he warns us, that their "end is destruction." Luxury destroys the soul. It turns it aside from God. It cuts it off from God, Who alone can give it life. All love, all care for God dies out of the soul that is given to luxury. He "that liveth in pleasure is dead while he liveth." All that can be truly called life perishes out of him. All high and holy aims, all care for others, all effort to do good in this poor suffering world, all feeling for the sorrows of others, all the nobler affections of the heart die down in him. Even in the world he is as one dead, like a pool of stagnant water, settled on its own dull depths, that moves not, stirs not, lightens not with the light of heaven, fertilizes nothing round it, but corrupts, and breeds pollution. Even so the luxurious man ripens for the still lower corruption of an everlasting death. His "end is destruction."

These words seem too strong perhaps to some of you. Can it be that one who only lives a life of pleasure must

be lost at last? Ah! we would fain hope not. We have known such amongst our own friends and companions. They were, it may be, some of the most pleasant and admired ones of our own set. Are they lost? We cannot say! we do not know where or what they are now. Perhaps if they could come back, we should shudder to hear what has been their *end*, that *end* which will never *end*. Perhaps if they could sit down once more at the old wine party, in the old rooms, they might say to us, 'My end is destruction.'

At least I can tell you of one who does so speak to us. Once only the Word of God tells us of the sufferings that come upon the lost soul even before the last judgment has been passed upon it. Once only a voice has spoken out of the unseen place beyond the grave to reveal to us what is the misery of one that has cast off God, and been cast away by Him. And from whose wretched spirit did that groan of anguish come? Who was it that died and lift up his eyes in hell being in torments? Who was it that was tormented in that flame? Was it some fornicator, some drunkard, some blasphemer, and reviler of God, some one who had got money by dishonest means? No. It was a polished gentleman, a man with no stain upon his character, such as the world would have noticed. And why then was he lost? What are we told about him? That he was fond of dress, and that he kept a good table. "He was clothed in purple and fine linen, and he fared sumptuously every day." He lived only to enjoy himself. It may well startle us to notice that this only man whom our Blessed Lord describes in the misery of his lost state was one whose only sin was easy, careless luxury. It was merely what men call enjoying life that was the destruction of his soul. Weigh well this life, my brethren, and mark

what followed, and then say whether for a short dream of pleasure it is worth while to throw away everlasting happiness. While the body craves for enjoyment, and the world offers its praise, and your foolish heart is ready to take up with these vanities, think of the end. In his lifetime he enjoyed his good things, but now he is tormented. Let the words ring in your ears, "their God is their belly, their glory is in their shame, they mind earthly things, their end is destruction." Say to yourselves in the moments of strong temptation, Shall I pamper my body and ruin my soul? Shall I make this world my all, and lose all in the world to come? Shall I live in ease and selfish luxury here, and lift up my eyes in torments beyond the grave? No: for a passing hour of empty pleasure, for the worthless admiration of a blind and foolish world, I will not sell my soul, my everlasting happiness, and my God. There is one great safeguard against the temptation to a luxurious life. Remember the end of such a life.

And the other great safeguard against luxury is meditation on the Passion of our Blessed Lord. When St. Paul tells us that self-indulgent luxury makes a man an enemy of the Cross of Christ, he suggests to us that a deep feeling of all that the Cross teaches us would preserve us from a luxurious life. Realize, my dear brethren, what the Blessed Jesus has borne for you, what He has been to you, and self-indulgence will become hateful to you. Self-love will pass out of your hearts as you see what a demand He has on your love. And this too is a motive that has more force to act upon the minds of the young than the last. It is perhaps hard to make the young look forward. They know indeed that they must die and be judged, but life seems to stretch fairly out before them, and they find it hard to face the thought of

the end which may be far off. But personal kindness touches them. It appeals to the warm, generous feelings of youth. It goes straight to the heart. A real act of genuine love softens, melts, wins them. They cannot stand out against it. It will hold them when all other ties break. Who amongst us has not known the constraining power of a mother's love, the force of a mother's tears, the mighty influence of one tender warning from her? Who has not striven against his own worse choice lest he should sadden that one heart where he was sure of love? Ah! then, how far more should the love of our Lord move us! Think only what these souls of ours were by nature, how stained with sin, how alienated from God, how hopeless of finding their own way back to God: and remember that our Lord has saved us from this misery, that He has cleansed us, and brought us back to God, and opened before us the door of everlasting life. Who that knows this would not feel bound to live for the one purpose of pleasing that Lord to whom he owes so much? What has He not been to us, and what ought not we to be to Him? This one thought alone is enough to drive out self-indulgence, and to plant the love of Christ in the soul as its one governing principle. But if you would learn to see self-indulgence in its true light, and to abhor it, dwell on those things one by one which your Lord gave up for you. Think of the rest, the peace, the calm of heaven which He laid aside that He might enter into the storm of life in this distracted world. Think of the poor home which barely sheltered His tender infancy, the childhood passed in the house of the carpenter in all its poverty, the patient waiting, unnoticed and unknown, in the obscure life of Nazareth, till the hour of His work was come. Then follow out that work itself, its toil, its sorrows, its disappointments, its hardships, its homelessness, its sleepless nights, its

journeys in the noonday heat, the misapprehensions with which it was received, the scorn that was heaped upon it, the small portion of success it seemed to meet with. Where in all this is one mark of self-indulgence? What could have borne our Lord on through all this but the strength of a self-forgetting, self-sacrificing love for us? But follow Him beyond the bearing of the daily cross, to His hanging nailed and fixed to the cross in all its sharp reality of intensest suffering. The ministry of love has been despised, the persevering toil of those three years has been cut short, by the cruel rejection of those whom He longed to bless; He has been tried, condemned, mocked and scourged. "A very scorn of men, and the outcast of the people," He is lifted up to be still derided in those last hours of agony. After one cry, which shews us that there were secret sufferings of His soul more sore even than the pangs of His agonized body,—a cry which tells us even of inward consolations and supports, so needful in the time of trial, foregone for our sakes,—at last He dies. Through all that life, in all those hours of suffering, what was there which He refused to give up for us? He left the throne of heaven. He refused all that the world had to offer Him, even down to its commonest comforts. At the last He gave Himself for us, body and soul, God and Man, upon the cross, and for what? That we might have everlasting life.

This is self-sacrificing love. O dwell on this till it sinks into your very souls, till you catch its spirit, till you long to follow your Lord and bear your cross after Him, till the spirit of soft self-pleasing is cast out of you, till you yearn for something to bear and to do for Him who bore all for you, till you can say as St. Paul did, "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not

henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again[a]." Yes! on your knees in meditation call up before you the thought of the form of our Blessed Lord, worn and wasted, and marred in His last sufferings. As He seems to hang before you on His cross, giving up Himself to save you, surely the sight will move and subdue your soul, and change, by the grace of God, the whole purpose of your life. It is said that at the moment of his death the wretched apostate Julian, who had set himself to overthrow the truth, acknowledged the power of the Lord whom he had denied in these words, "O Galilæan, Thou hast conquered!" Take these same words on your lips, as you gaze in heart upon your Lord, and see the fulness of the sacrifice which He made for you. As you remember how He gave up all for you, say to Him, 'O Blessed Jesus! Thou hast conquered, Thou hast overcome, Thou hast won this heart. As I see what Thou didst bear, what Thou didst give up for me, out of love for my poor soul, to cleanse it, and bring me back to God, I offer Thee all I am, and all I have. Yes! O my Lord! teach me to live, to labour, and to suffer for Thee. I do not ask to follow my own will, to indulge and please myself. No! give me something to bear, give me something to do for Thee. I owe my whole self to Thee, my every joy now, my every hope hereafter. For whom can I live but for Thee? Here as I kneel beneath Thy Cross and see Thee giving all Thou hast to give for me, I render up myself to Thee, and as for the luxury that would make me an enemy to that Cross, and steal away my heart from Thee, I abhor it and cast it out as a pollution from my soul.'

[a] 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

SERMON VII.[a]

The Conflict:—with Impurity.

NUMBERS xxv. 11.

"Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned My wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for My sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in My jealousy."

THE subject for our consideration this evening is a very important one. In all ages God's people have had to maintain a conflict with impurity. The world before the Flood provoked the Deluge by monstrous transgressions of this class. The sins of Sodom and Gomorrha drew down the first flashes of that fire which shall at last purge the whole globe. The sins which caused the land of Canaan to spue out its inhabitants, and made their extermination necessary, lest they should breed a moral pestilence, were connected with impure rites and incest. The sin that accompanied the worship of the golden calf, that caused the Prophet to break the tables of the covenant, and to arm brothers to take vengeance on their nearest and dearest, was of that lewd nature which belonged to many forms of idolatry. Phinehas the priest was conspicuous for his zeal on one side of the conflict, and Balaam the false prophet for his plots against virtue on the other.

[a] A collection was made after this sermon for the Oxford Female Penitentiary and House of Refuge.

The struggle of Elijah against Jezebel was very much a conflict with the impurity that belonged to the Phœnician worship of Ashtaroth. The profanations which the wicked King Manasseh wrought in the holy place, and brought in as a flood on Jerusalem, were of a disgustingly licentious character. When our Lord visibly took part in the conflict, during His earthly ministry, the adulterous character of the generation elicited His severe rebukes. The Gospel brought in a standard of morality above the Jewish, (though the Jewish was far above that of the rest of the world); and what a struggle Christianity had to wage with the tone of a place like Corinth, we may see from one Epistle of St. Paul's; what it had to do at Rome, we may infer from fearful passages in another. The condition of Roman society is shewn by the contemporary writings of poets, satirists, and historians, and by the pictures disinterred at Pompeii. The Church had indeed done a great work when it had swept away the mythology of Greece and Rome, with its gods practising and presiding over divers immoralities.

Instead of allowing men to think matter necessarily evil, and the flesh incurably vicious, the Gospel taught men that their bodies were allied to the glorified Body of the Redeemer, might be kept as temples of the Holy Ghost, and should rise hereafter to be the permanent and appropriate vehicles of purified souls. What a work had been done when Epicureanism, with its toleration of lust, had been exposed as a philosophy, and, duty not pleasure, established as the rule for man!

Would we know what the Gospel has done for the cause of purity, we have only to contrast Christian nations, with all their shortcomings, with heathens or Mahometans. It is easy for those who are content with

a superficial view, to give us charming pictures of the apparent innocence of manners different from our own, but whenever a person has resided in a country long enough to be a fair judge, his report always reveals the lower standard of those nations who are strangers to the Gospel.

Has not the influence of Christianity enhanced the sanctity of the marriage tie, proscribed or diminished divorce, suppressed polygamy, caused unnatural crimes to be execrated, and set up a chivalrous standard of man's duty as vindicator of maiden chastity? Has it not refined literature, and given scope for the growth of that purer spirit of earthly love, of which we find so little in heathen literature? Modern fictions may turn too exclusively on such subjects; they may have defects of various kinds which we lament; they may too often move solely in the element of this world, as if the present life were everything; but who shall deny that with their romantic, unworldly standard, their elevation above animal impulses, their ideal picture of constancy, self-sacrifice, and devoted attachment, they are at least witnesses to the working of the better leaven, proofs that a regenerating element is in operation around us?

I need not stop to trace how the increased purity of family life in Christian countries has promoted political freedom, while, on the other hand, polygamy always engenders despotism; or how, by undermining slavery, the Gospel cuts off one prolific source of impurity; how, along with increased purity, education reaches a height which is not attainable in heathen and slave-holding communities. I will not insist how life is adorned and comforted in its every stage by the mutual love of mothers, brothers, sisters, husbands, wives, to an extent which is increased with every advance in purity, and

diminished by every infraction of the laws which God has laid down for the relation of the sexes. Next to holiness and the Christian graces, these domestic affections constitute the best inheritance, the truest joys of man; they are open to the poor as well as the rich: we cannot make every one well clothed, well fed, or highly educated, but there is no reason why the poor should not love each other intensely—why in every rank husband and wife should not edify their children by the example of unbroken harmony—why brothers should not have in their sisters the embodiment of all their best notions of female modesty and purity—why the love of youth and maiden should not be elevated by the desire to reproduce those happy, pure homes with which the memories of childhood are intertwined. No reason is there, dear brethren, except the working of that foul thing sin—sin which desolated Paradise, and sowed dissension between the first man and wife.

In England Christianity has been at work for ages, throwing salt into those springs of family life from which the national well-being issues. I know not that there is among us any special source of immorality which can be traced to our unconverted forefathers and a heathen origin, save that the impurities of the literature of Greece and Rome are not always sufficiently guarded against in our places of education; but still there is here, as elsewhere, the enduring conflict of Christ with the sin that is in the world. Religion has to strive with the natural impurity of the human heart, just as it has to maintain a conflict with its tendencies to idolatry, to selfishness, to scepticism, to indolence. There will always arise an unwholesome curiosity to lift the veil which God's order draws; there will always be a difficulty in attaining the mastery over appetite, in becoming not like the brute

beast, coarsely gratifying its lusts, but like the restored man, holding himself in, denying, bridling himself, when indulgence is unlawful. When once sin has been committed, there will always be an increasing weakness of the will, growing entanglements, thin threads tightening into the iron chains of habit, a tainted imagination, a vitiated memory, drawing in poison from all that is most lovely, genial, and healthful to the unfallen.

As sure as ever sin has been admitted, it fatally propagates itself, it affects departments of the being seemingly most remote from the original mischief; the soul is clouded over in its relations to God; prayer is felt to be a mockery, is first deadened, then disused. The temptation arises to believe that most around are similarly blemished; the wicked plea is admitted that one more transgression (another, and another) will make matters no worse. Warnings, conveyed by the silent but sure approach of God's judgments, are slighted—the nerves, e.g., fail, but some other reason, not the true one, is accepted, as accounting for that decay of bodily vigour which punishes sins done in the body; the promise of youth disappears, courage is lost, the affections wither, the heart is unable to bestow itself in pure affection, it shrinks into moody solitariness, because more and more sin is finding the transgressor out. Each class of crime furnishes peculiar warnings of its own, and may be used to set forth some aspect of sin which is emphatic in its lesson. Murder has its avenger, it sees ghosts, it fears where no fear is, it turns the brave man into a coward. Miserliness is its own tormentor. Pride punishes by the isolation in which it leaves a man. Gluttony entails disease. Drunkenness has its long train of evils. The fate of sensuality especially exhibits the folly of sin, its bitter consequences, the im-

possibility of entire recovery, and the law that sins committed in the body are punished in the body.

Impurity is a sin which will always abound; but there are circumstances, belonging to our day, which intensifying its evils, have, no doubt, led to the selection of this subject for your consideration this Lent, and justify the insertion of impurity as one of the special corruptions of the age.

In a state of society like ours, some crimes become less common; crimes (in the legal sense) against the person are naturally rarer, than when men live at wide distances from each other, with much out-of-door employment and rustic habits. But, in proportion as the temptations to, and opportunities for, violent crimes diminish, there arise increased facilities for the sins of impurity. These are promoted by luxury, softness, and abundance. God knows how sad it is to hear clergyman after clergyman in rural parishes confess with shame that too many of the persons, whom they unite in marriage, ought to appear as penitents. This is a matter in which we have reason to fear that our country is more disgraced than most. One reason may be that our country districts are becoming more assimilated to towns; for impurity is, more than most sins, the vice of great cities. It will, indeed, prevail wherever man is man—in villages that look most primitive, poisoning the loveliest valleys, and contrasting with the purity of the everlasting snow of the sublimest mountains. But the temptation is aggravated in towns; in them there is less public opinion to restrain. In great cities persons are removed from the influences which kept them straight in far-off country parishes; neighbours scarcely know each other's names or occupations; add to this the temptations suggested by

casinoes and theatres, the profligate tone of many low publications, the presence of abandoned women, who are computed to be 30,000 in London alone; take into account the devilish readiness with which sinners are led to entice others to follow them in vice, and putting all together, who can wonder that parents tremble to entrust their sons to great cities? Alas, brethren, what a seething ocean of vice do we enter on, when we approach this subject! The seaport place, the garrison town, the permanent camp set up on some bleak common; because it affords space to manœuvre troops, what hellish scenes of lust, intemperance, and murder do not these engender! Surely there can be no doubt that Christians are bound to recognise impurity as one of the special evils with which in these times the Church has to wage a conflict.

It is not difficult to mention social causes which have enhanced the evil. The growth of the manufacturing system, for the last century, has accumulated, in several centres of industry, a population for which there has been no proper spiritual provision. Large parishes were not broken up, as they should have been; churches, with all their accompanying institutions, were not provided; the men too often grew up ungodly, and the women became, in some cases, offensively immodest. The deficient supply of cottages in country parishes, the overcrowding in towns, have led to habits unworthy of a civilized community, most dangerous to family purity and common decency. The alteration in the laws of the State by which the fatal power of divorce, before wrongly granted to the rich, is now bestowed on the middle classes, is introducing a new element of mischief into ordinary English life. We get further and further from the age when Church cen-

sures were enforced. Such discipline as was exercised by Bishop Wilson, at the Isle of Man, has not been replaced by any more adapted to our times.

Under these circumstances, what does it become us to do? Surely not to shut our eyes to the danger, not to sit down, with folded arms, making no attempt to stay the evil, but each according to our ability, in our sphere, be it a wide or a narrow one, to come to the rescue. Let us seek from God the grace of purity for ourselves, that so we may be purifiers of society. Remember you were each pledged in your baptism to be Christ's soldier; and in what battles, against what enemy, can you more truly serve Him than in the daily conflict with impurity? See to your own hearts first, suffering no unclean imagination to harbour within, training yourselves to habits of self-control in all things; in Lent using special discipline to gain power and hardness, like an athlete, or one exercising himself before a campaign, that you may do good service in the fight that is to be carried on around you. Knights errant of old were pledged to protect virtue: let us devote ourselves to a crusade against the evils of our day, prepare for rough blows in the encounter, and be content to be unpopular, and to make some enemies, if we protest, remonstrate, denounce, and attempt to extricate, as earnestly as duty requires.

Much may be done with the young. The most difficult of all battles is the boy's struggle with his own lusts; but in the order of Divine providence, time is given for moral principle to be formed, before youth's worst temptations commence. Let parents and preceptors not be afraid of some plain speaking; false delicacy has done as much harm as unnecessary and premature revelations. Let not parents be too un-

favourable to early marriages; prefer to see your children in a less dignified position which shall enable them to marry early, rather than in a more aristocratic one, which will be more exposed to temptation. Treat your servants, as far as they will let you, like your own children, that they may indeed feel part of the family. Induce them to believe that their virtue and honour are dear to you, on the highest grounds. Do something for that movement which God, of His mercy, has set on foot as a special help against the sins of the day: I mean the Church Penitentiary cause, which, now for some years, has raised a witness for definite Church teaching in Penitentiaries, and encouraged the agency of self-devoted women. Watch with interest, aye with more than interest, with sympathy and approval, the attempt to naturalize sisterhoods among us, and to revive, in our reformed Church, the association in communities of those who are to do, in our day, the work of the ancient deaconesses. The more elevated the position which women occupy, the more they win reverence by devotion and good works, by risking their lives in nursing the sick, by descending to raise the fallen and reclaim the contaminated, by labouring unsullied amidst the sin-defiled, the greater the benefit they confer on the other sex, by presenting in real life a copy of ideal excellence, and furnishing true sisters, in various walks of life, to those who are far from their childhood's home, and cannot again be soothed and elevated by the sisters in blood, whose pure affection was one of the happiest influences in the home of their boyhood.

Discountenance vice, though in order to do so you may have to make some sacrifices. Maintain the necessary severity of society against the woman, though penitent.

Shun the male transgressor, unless you have reason to think him penitent, though society has condoned his fault, and riches and rank make him influential. Disrelish, avoid, proscribe books which you believe to be unhealthy, though all the world should be said to be reading them. Endeavour to hit the happy medium as to dress, works of art, dances, &c., and while strict, vigilant, and exacting of propriety, do not bring discredit on your principles by prudery and puritanism. Take encouragement from any evidence that God has blessed the labours of those who have witnessed for Him in times past. Rejoice that our literature is purer than in the times of Charles II.; that, thanks in some degree to the influence of the present Court, our higher classes are better than in the times of the Prince Regent. Be thankful that our public schools and universities are improved, and more Christian earnestness than of old is applied to reforming them. Give praise that God has given the English people an appreciation of the blessings of home life, and that we fortunately have that basis to work upon, when we plead in the interests of morality, and protest against all that would rob English life of its best charm and truest inspiration.

But while we think it lawful and wise to notice this vantage ground, meet and right to give thanks for signs of God's working in men's hearts towards better things, while we thank Him for raising up, a few years ago, some special witnesses on this head [b], and for the growing institutions which date from that period, let us be on our guard against that self-laudation which is a special vice of Englishmen. Let us take shame for what our theatres have been, perhaps still are; for the spectacles

[b] Bishop Armstrong and others.

which the streets of our great towns present at night; for the filth that floods our newspapers, and would not be tolerated in lands which we often, without reason, despise as less moral than ourselves. Let us remember with confusion how many of our untaught poor turn Mormonites; how disfigured our literature has been with indelicacy from the time of Chaucer to that of Burns and Byron. Let us be humble when we think how much purer are the Irish poor than our own, though our people are wont to look down upon them as an inferior race. Let us pray for inward purity ourselves, for power to reclaim others, and for a right judgment and unflinching courage on the questions which are pretty sure to be debated, and on which Churchmen should clear their views. If I mistake not, attempts will be made to introduce some of the worst parts of the continental system among ourselves. There are good men who stand aloof from the Penitentiary cause, because they think improvement hopeless. Parish officers will often tolerate evils, rather than make themselves unpopular by waging a war with them. There are towns in which the worst of trades has become a vested interest, and along with that of the keepers of low public-houses, exerts weight in vestries and poor-house management. Sin is frightfully rampant, souls are perishing, the everlasting interests of our scholars, and our children, are at stake; it becomes us to respond to the call, "who is on the Lord's side? who?" that we may have the blessing of Phinehas, and the Lord may make with us a covenant of peace.

One use of stirring such a subject as the present is that it sets men thinking what assistance they can render to the cause of virtue. When a good man's attention

is once obtained to this subject, then, if he is a landlord in the country, he thinks how he may improve his cottages; if he lives in a great city, he considers what can be done towards improving the dwellings of the poor; if he is a magistrate or parish officer, he thinks what may be done to close demoralizing places of amusement; if he is a legislator, he considers whether it has not been a national sin to prefer revenue to morality; if he is a master or employer of labour, he resolves to attend to the religious condition of the men and boys of his establishment.

It is one blessing of works of charity that they are so connected together, that we cannot begin a right effort in one direction, without finding that unawares we have been led on to other enterprizes. The work of reformation suggests the expediency of prevention, and so those, who began with trying to reform the criminal, are impelled to labour to fortify the innocent, and to provide, for young men and women, friendly societies instead of penny theatres, reading-rooms instead of public-houses, pure literature instead of the vile publications which our magistrates now find that they have to deal with, literally, by the cart-load. There is, e.g., no greater incitement to the duties of the Sunday-school teacher, than to mark the contrast between the happy children yet unfallen, the joy and light of their parents' homes, and the coarse features, besotted and brutalized, from which woman's modesty has vanished. The lovelier a thing is, the more lamentable its ruin. The words we use, in common parlance, on this subject are most affecting; we say, "He was the ruin of her,"—the ruin of that which the good God planned to be so lovely. The sweet sister, the type of purity to brothers,

the supporting wife, the mother of children, the head of a household, the Christian matron, dignified even in poverty, honoured in old age,—yes, the ruin of all this,—all this forfeited, for the short career of profligacy and intemperance; how short none suspect but those who know the statistics of the subject,—from five to seven years, say some. O what mysteries and blessings does vice break in upon and desecrate! Yes, brethren, by the sanctities of your own homes, by the mysterious joys and sorrows connected with a Christian family, pity those who know not what they do, when they violate God's laws.

Verily, the universe is so constructed as, even in this world, to punish vice. No one sins against the laws of God, be it in a great degree or be it, as men think, in a small, but he meets his punishment, his sin finds him out. Wherein he sinned, therein he is punished; he is repaid in kind; something comes written on the dart which strikes him, to tell him why it has come, why to him of all others. Alas! many in the Refuge, for which we plead, are probably far less guilty than many out of it. There are often some extenuating circumstances which make the guilt of these poor creatures, at any rate, less surprising. They were orphans, or they had step-mothers, or they were entrapped by the agents of vice, who, in great cities, bear a sad proportion to the agents of virtue. We have not merely to work against devils, but we have to outnumber and counter-work human instruments, doing the work of demons, entrapping the country girl, prowling about the hospital, offering pretended kindness, and alluring to sham homes. Shall these creatures work for evil, and will not you labour for good? will you not aid those who are doing your work, the Church's work?

If you ask how to help, I dare say I shall not be wrong in replying,—

By collecting alms and making known the Institution.

By procuring situations in service for the penitents.

By providing employment, clothing, books for the House.

By remembering in prayer those who are, or have been, in the Home, and those engaged in the work.

SERMON VIII.

The Conflict:—with undue Exaltation of Intellect.

2 CORINTHIANS x. 5.

"Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

HERE is an Apostle of the Lord Jesus who speaks the language of a soldier. He is planning a campaign; nay, rather, he is making war: he glows with the fire of a genuine military enthusiasm. The original Greek which he uses has a vigour and point in it which is lost, to a great extent, in our English translation. He might almost be a Roman general, charged to sustain the honour of the Empire in a revolted province or beyond a remote frontier; he might seem to be illustrating the haughty maxim which defined the duty of an imperial people,—

"To spare the vanquished but to crush the proud."

Indeed, it has been urged that the recent history of Cilicia itself may have well suggested this language to St. Paul. The Apostle's native country had been the scene of some very fierce struggles in the wars against Mithridates and the pirates; and we are told that the latter war was only ended, not sixty years before the Apostle's birth, by the reduction of one hundred and twenty strongholds and the capture of more than ten

thousand prisoners[a]. The dismantled ruins may have easily and naturally impressed the boyish imagination of Saul of Tarsus, with a vivid sense of the destructive energy of the military power of Rome; but the Apostle of the nations only remembers these earlier impressions to give them a spiritual application. The weapons of his warfare are not carnal; the standard under which he fights is a more sacred sign than that of the Cæsar; the operations which he projects are to be carried out in a territory more difficult of conquest than any which kept the conquerors of the world at bay. He is invading the region of human thought; and as he fights for God, he is sternly resolved upon conquest. He sees rising before him the lofty fortresses of hostile errors; they must be reduced and razed[b]. Every mountain fastness[c] to which the enemy of Light and Love can retreat must be scaled and destroyed, and all the thought of the human soul[d] which is hostile to the authority of Divine truth, must be "led away as a prisoner of war[e]" into the camp of Christ. Truly a vast and unaccountable ambition; a dream—if it were not, as it was, a necessity; a tyranny—if anything less vigorous and trenchant had been consistent with the claims of the truth of God, or equal to the needs of the soul of man.

The particular opposition to the work of Christ which the Apostle encountered at Corinth was indeed less intellectual in its make than the Galatian Judaism or than the theosophic angel-worship which was popular

[a] Stanley *in loc.*, who quotes Appian, *Bell. Mith.*, 234—238.

[b] *καθαιροῦντες*, the military term for reducing a fortress. See Wetstein *in loc.*; Elsner, Obs., p. 152, qu. by Meyer.

[c] *ὕψωμα* is apparently the Hebrew בָּמָה. Stanley *in loc.*

[d] *πᾶν νόημα.* Cf. Meyer *in loc.* [e] *αἰχμαλωτίζοντες.*

at Colossæ, or than the sharply-defined heresies of a later time which, as we know from the Pastoral Epistles, threatened or infected the churches of Ephesus and Crete. St. Paul's Corinthian opponents resisted, depreciated, disowned, beyond everything else, the Apostle's own personal authority. This, however, was the natural course of things at a time when single Apostles well-nigh impersonated the whole doctrinal action of the Church; and feeling this, St. Paul speaks not as one who was re-asserting a personal claim of any sort, but merely and strictly as a soldier, as an organ, I might say, as a function, of the truth. The truth had an indefeasible right to reign in the intellect of man. The Apostle asserts that right, when he speaks of bringing the whole intelligence of man into the obedience of Christ. Now, as then, Christ's Church is militant here on earth, not less in the sphere of thought than in the sphere of outward and visible action; and St. Paul's burning words rise above the temporary circumstances which called them forth, and furnish a motto and an encouragement to us who, after the lapse of eighteen centuries, fight in the ranks of the same army and against the same kind of foes as he did.

Remark, first of all, that it is "the undue exaltation of intellect" with which the Church of Christ is in energetic and perpetual conflict. With intellect itself —with the thought of man recognising at once its power and its weakness, its vast range and its necessary limits—religion has, can have, no quarrel. It were a libel on the All-wise Creator to suppose that between intellect and spirit, between thought and faith, there could be any original relations other than those of perfect harmony. Paradise could have been the scene of no such unseemly conflict as that which we are con-

sidering; and here, as elsewhere in human nature, we are met by unmistakeable traces of the fall of our first parent. A range of granite mountains, which towers proudly above the alluvial soil of a neighbouring plain and above the softer rocks at its immediate base, speaks to the geologist of a subterranean fire that at some remote epoch has thus upheaved the primal crust of the earth with convulsive violence. And the arrogant pretensions of human thought in the children of Adam speak no less truly of an original wound which has marred the harmony of the faculties of the soul, and has forced the mind of fallen man into an attitude which instinctively disputes the claims of revelation. But that attitude is no part of the Creator's handiwork; it is due to the creature's own abuse of the perfect freedom of his will. For originally intellect is the ally and discoverer of truth; it finds its highest employment as the instrument of *religious* truth; and Jesus Christ, Who restores the harmony of our nature, speaks, through His Church, "a wisdom," or philosophy, "among them that are perfect[f];" a wisdom of which illuminated intellect is the student and guardian, and which amply recognises the high and abundant honour which the Creator has put upon His creature's thought.

But the Fall did not merely deprive human reason of the light of grace; it so disturbed the original structure of our nature as to make reason generally the slave of passion instead of its master. And therefore the intellect which exalts itself against revelation is often in reality, not free intellect, but intellect acting under the secret bidding of an irritated passion. Not that intellect is itself usually conscious that it is thus acting under orders. The passions, like some women,

[f] 1 Cor. ii. 6.

know how to disguise, and even how to recommend their despotism by the graceful movements and gentle courtesies of a well-simulated obedience. Or at best, intellect is but half conscious that it is not free; and therefore it asserts its freedom with that passionate vehemence with which persons who feel their place in society to be a little doubtful are apt to insist upon their social claims. Certainly intellect never vaunts its freedom with such nervous eagerness as when it is in conflict with the Revelation of God. For instance we do not say to ourselves again and again that we are the champions of free thought when we are engaged in the study of pure mathematics. Mathematics do not touch our moral nature; we suspect nothing; we solve an equation as dispassionately as if we were ourselves pure reason, and nothing else—beings without passion, without conscience, without will, without a moral history. But revelation, by its every dogma and every precept, at once challenges the activity of will and conscience; and the passions, like those watch-dogs who warn the inhabitants of remote country-houses of the approach of a stranger, sound an alarm within the soul at the first signs of the coming of the Son of Man. Thus natural intellect meets the heavenly Visitant, sometimes with a movement of sudden sharp irritation, sometimes with a stern but unavowed resolution to resist Him, generally without frankness and real freedom of welcome, like a person who felt it necessary to be upon his guard and to maintain an attitude of secret if not of defiant suspicion.

Look around you, my brethren, and mark the varieties of intellect which enter in various ways into this conflict with religion. There is, first of all, mercenary intellect. This intellect writes or talks at the rate of so

much per annum, and on a given understanding. "You take so much, and you write up that minister, you advocate that line of policy, you denounce this institution, you attack that theory, you blacken that public man."—"Done." Necessity, it may be said, knows no law; and there is an unexpressibly sad proverb about poverty, to the effect that it cannot afford to have a conscience. We need not now care to examine that saying too narrowly: some of us perhaps have known cases in which really noble souls have bent to a degradation from which they shrank in secret agony, and from which, long ago, they would have torn themselves away if the comfort and even the life of others near and dear to them had not been dependent on their sad, ignoble toil. Gladly indeed would I here be silent. But when this hired intellect, in bondage to sharp necessity or to the mere spirit of gain, passionately asserts its monopoly of freedom, and even tells us, the ministers of Christ, who have freely entered His service, and who rejoice in what it calls our fetters, that we are not free;—I cannot be surprised, because I understand the situation in which it finds itself; but I must be permitted to protest. Certainly we may admit that conflict with religion under the circumstances is sufficiently natural; it is an expedient for asserting the appearance of freedom, at little cost and with considerable dramatic effect.

Again, look at self-advertising intellect. Here is a vain man, who has a certain power of thought and expression. This intellect is bent on achieving a reputation, no matter how. It will write something startling, or, as it would say, original; it will deny all that has been affirmed, and denounce all that has been held in reverence. When it asserts that this or that Book

of the Divine Scripture is but a collection of foolish legends, it will take a certain pleasure in the thought of all the varied perplexity, and vexation, and distress, and bustle, and deliberations, which it will cause among religious persons who chance to meet with its irritating production. Probably it has no wish to cause unnecessary pain; but its object is notoriety, and notoriety is only possible to it under these conditions.

Again, there is sensualized intellect—intellect under the guidance and command of animal passion. This is no fancy species. It were not difficult to point to whole literatures, characterized by the greatest fertility of thought, and power and beauty of language, whose entire drift and purpose is to rouse in the imagination and veins of man those fiery passions which are his worst enemy.

Again, there is the self-reliant or cynical intellect, too independent to be mercenary, too proud to be vain, too self-respecting to be the slave of sense; yet just as little free as the most mercenary, or vain, or sensualized thought, since it is the slave of a sublime egotism, although its slavery is well disguised, and its own cold, clear, incisive energy passes among men for the very bloom and majesty of perfect intellectual freedom. We need not examine other varieties; nor may we forget that here and there among the earnest opponents of the Gospel there are to be found elect souls with a pure and devoted love of truth—souls whom adverse circumstances have for awhile bewildered and misled, but whose true home is in the camp of Christ. These have not yet found the road to Damascus; but we may safely leave them to the love and providence of the Good God. But with or without them, it is plain that we are in presence of a body of active thought,

not the less vigorous because it works for hire, or for vainglory, or for sensual delight, or for some refined or magnificent ambition; not the less vigorous because it is a slave; but which, as being enslaved to powers who are instinctively opposed to the Gospel, is certain to find itself, sooner or later, in conflict with the living, working power of that Gospel among the thoughts and hearts of men.

It is noteworthy, and indeed it is implied in the language of the Apostle, that intellectual opposition to Revelation, except on great occasions, and under the leadership of distinguished captains, does not usually meet us Christians in the open field. I do not, indeed, forget Celsus, or Porphyry, or Voltaire, or Strauss; but look at scepticism in the second generation, or as it meets you in everyday life, and you will find that its instinct is to take refuge on natural heights, or behind artificial earthworks; that it screens itself under the cover of some false principle, or of some unwarrantable assumption. To "cast down these imaginations" may be less exciting than the whirl and noise of a general engagement; but it is the everyday and practical aspect of the conflict which we are considering. And if with limited time, and in so vast a field, it is here necessary to resign one-half, or more than one-half, of the outline before us; I shall proceed briefly to notice one or two of the leading false principles and assumptions which now oppose the work of Jesus Christ our Lord in the souls of men. Much will be thereby lost to the subject in the completeness of speculative treatment; more, I humbly think, will be won, if any one Christian who hears me, is better enabled to understand and to take his part in the unceasing and mighty struggle between human error on the one side, and the

Truth which came from heaven eighteen centuries ago, on the other.

α. Now a primary characteristic of sceptical intellect is its unwillingness to make room for faith, to acknowledge the true province and sphere of Revelation. Intellect assumes itself to cover the whole field of thought; it grudges the admission, that there may exist a higher world, beyond its ken, and over which it has no purchase or power of vision. Above the world of mere sense, there is the world of reason and natural thought: that is granted. But it is tacitly assumed that there is no world beyond; and that although man is notoriously a threefold being, composed of body, soul, and spirit[g], yet that spirit, his highest and most ennobling characteristic, has no object-matter beyond that which can be ministered to it by the natural intelligence of the soul. Intellect feels itself humiliated, if it be supposed to be debarred from the sight of any spiritual fact; and as not more than a few facts of a strictly spiritual character are dimly discerned even by the *élite* of natural intelligences, men deem it essential to the supposed dignity of their reason to deny the existence of an order of things which unilluminated reason does not see. Yet in the study of the natural world we find no such unworthy sensitiveness as to the power and range of the bodily organ of sight. Look towards the heavens, and ask the astronomer whether beyond the stars and suns that reveal themselves to his most powerful telescopes, there are stars and suns which his instruments cannot enable him to detect; and he will tell you that by his observations he can determine the existence and movements of such purely invisible bodies with the unerring certainty of

[g] 1 Thess. v. 23.

mathematical reason. Ask him whether there are yet other bodies in the infinitude of space, too remote to be apprehended by the penetrating gaze even of his formulæ; and he will reply, not merely that the existence of such bodies is possible, but that the analogies of his science lead him to regard it as nothing less than certain. Ask, on the other hand, the entomologist, whose microscope has discovered to him the strange forms which people each drop of water, or each fraction of a cubic inch of atmosphere, whether he has yet reached the last term, the most minute embodiment of the principle of life, and he will hesitate to assume that he has yet done more than ascertain the existence of an order of creatures who may be as very monsters in the eyes of an invisible population of beings around and beyond them. It is no discredit to the organs of sense, that even when thus stimulated and strengthened by a scientific apparatus, they fail us, at a point when we cannot but feel that beyond their ken there lies a world which a higher power than sense must discover, and which we explore as best we may under the guidance of inference. Nor need reason be jealous, if she herself cannot always satisfy—if as we ascend the mountain of thought, she reaches a stage at which she must leave us in sheer bewilderment to the perilous guidance of imagination, unless she is content to entrust us to the well-attested authority, to the practised eye, and to the sure guardianship of Divine faith. Reason, indeed, can do much, even beyond the province in which she confessedly reigns. She can prove to man that he possesses an immaterial soul, that his will is really free, that deep in his secret heart there is the mysterious but indelible law which distinguishes right from wrong. Reason, as she studies

human society, can formulate the principles of justice and order, which are essential to its permanency; she can even reach a certain knowledge of the First Cause of all; she can demonstrate His existence by two or three lines of argument; she can infer that He is One, that He is a personal Being, that He is infinite in His perfections, and unfettered in His action and His will, and that His creatures are under the strongest possible obligations towards Him. Certainly, reason is peculiarly happy, if without the (at least) indirect guidance of a supernatural Revelation she can reach as far as this; and she knows well that each step of her advance is certain to be disputed. But she can penetrate no further, and her highest conquests do but suggest problems which she cannot solve, and afford glimpses of a world on which she may not presume to enter. She has at best discovered enough to make life a dreary mystery, and the prospect of death a frightful nightmare. What knows she of the Inner Life of God, as He has opened it to us believing Christians in the august doctrine of the most Holy Trinity? What can she tell us concerning the real nature and effects of sin, concerning the law of its action, and the law of its removal? What can she propose on the all-important and pressing question whether any and what communion is possible between the soul and God? What, in other words, has she that can meet the needs of the soul of man, as they are met by the Christian doctrines of the Atoning Death and mediatorial work of Jesus Christ, of the work of the Holy Spirit, the power of penitence, the power of prayer, the power of the Sacraments? Certainly she has her own sphere and province; we may not ignore it; we may not depreciate it in the supposed interests of faith, as if faith could only reign

when reason was insulted; but she must accept her providential place; she must make room for faith; she must act as its handmaid, not as its substitute; or her pride will surely prepare for her a terrible chastisement. There is no saying how low an intelligence may fall, which, persevering in its determination to rise no higher than itself, voluntarily immerses itself in its own dark prison-house, and sinks deeper and deeper into the abyss as it madly flies from the knowledge and love of the infinite God.

(β.) But when the possibility, the need, and even—to take a long stride—the fact, of a supernatural revelation has been admitted, the rebellious intellect of man renews the conflict at a point beyond. At least, it is urged, a stipulation must be made as to the contents of revelation: revelation must not include mysteries. Whatever may be revealed, it shall not elude our full mental grasp; we will assume ourselves to possess a verifying faculty which shall eliminate from revelation all that wears the air of mystery, since mystery is inconsistent with that intellectual dignity which becomes us men, even when we are listening to the Most High God.

I might indeed insist, with Bishop Butler, on the unreasonableness of determining beforehand what a revelation from God ought or ought not to contain, since we are in no position to speculate with any success or safety upon such a subject. But I will ask a simple question, What, my brethren, do you mean by mystery? You have, it may be, invested the word with some damaging sense that does not in reality belong to it. Mystery, you think, is but another name for a confused statement, or for a contradiction, or for an impossibility, or for a purely unintelligible process, or for something

which is believed on no sufficient grounds whatever, or for a reverie of the heated religious imagination. No, believe it, a mystery is none of these things. A mystery is a truth, a fact, but a hidden truth. We see some truths directly, just as in the open air we gaze with the bodily eye upon the sun shining in the heavens. We know other truths indirectly, just as we know that the sun is shining from the ray of sunlight which streams in at the window of the room in which we are sitting. Now a mystery is a truth of the latter kind: it is apprehended as true, it is not comprehended; it does not lie on the surface of things, it cannot be seen in itself, it can only be known from the evidence or symptoms of its presence. Yet the evidence, whatever it be, proves to us that the truth is there; and the truth is not the less a truth because it is itself shrouded from our direct gaze. Thus St. Paul speaks of the mystery of the Incarnation and of the mystery of the calling of the Gentiles when alluding to the fact that these divine purposes were hidden for ages in the mind of God, and at length revealed[h]; and he speaks of marriage as a great mystery, meaning that it embodies a secret correspondence to the union between our Lord and His Church, which does not lie upon the surface[i]; and the clergy are "stewards of the mysteries of God[k]," that is to say, specially of the Sacraments, each of which is "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace," although the presence of the inward grace is inferred not necessarily from experience, but always from our Saviour's promise. Certainly in religion we are surrounded by mysteries,

[h] Rom. xvi. 25; and Eph. i. 9, iii. 3—5.
[i] Eph. v. 32.
[k] 1 Cor. iv. 1.

that is to say, by truths, of the presence of which we are aware, but the internal nature and complete range of which we cannot fully comprehend; and I may add, that the wonderful world in which we men live, whether the higher world of faith be open to our gaze or not, is a very home and temple of transcendent mysteries. You walk to-morrow afternoon into the country, and you note how here and there the swelling buds, or the first fresh green of the opening leaf, reminds you that already the spring is about to re-enact before your eyes the beautiful spectacle of her yearly triumph. Everywhere around you there are evidences of the movements of a mysterious power which you can neither see, nor touch, nor define, nor measure, nor understand. This power lives speechless, noiseless, unseen, yet energetic in every bough above your head, in every blade of grass beneath your feet. It bursts forth from the grain into the shoot, from the branch into the bud, and leaf, and flower, and fruit; it creates bark, and fibre, and height, and bulk, and grace of form and lustre of colour; it is incessant in its labour, it is prodigal of its beauty, it is uniformly generous and bountiful in its gifts to man. Yet, in itself, what is it? You give it a name; you call it vegetation: and perhaps you are a botanist, you trace and you register the variety of its effects and the laws of its movement. But after all you have only labelled it; and though it is so common, it is not in reality familiar to you; and though you have watched it unthinkingly from your childhood upwards, and perhaps see in it nothing particular now, you may well pause in wonder and awe before it, for of a truth it is a mystery. What is it in itself, this power which is so certainly around you, yet which so perfectly escapes you when you attempt to detect or to detain it in your

grasp; what is it, this pervading force, this life-principle, this incomprehensible yet most certainly present fact, but an assertion of the principle of mystery which robes the soil of God's earth with beauty, that everywhere it may cheer the faith and rebuke the pride of man? Yes, when next you behold the green field or the green tree, be sure that you are in the presence of a very sacrament of nature, since your eye rests upon the outward and visible sign of an inward and wholly invisible force.

Or look at those other forces with which you seem to be so much at home, and which you term attraction and gravitation. What do you really know about them? You name them: perhaps you can repeat a mathematical expression which measures their action; but after all you have only named and described an effect; you have not accounted for, you have not penetrated, you have not unveiled its cause. Why, I ask, in the nature of things, should such laws reign around us? They do reign, but why? what is the power which determines gravitation, where does it reside, how is it to be seized, apprehended, touched, examined? There it is: but there, inaccessible to your keenest study, it remains veiled and buried; you confess a presence which you cannot analyze. And you yourselves,—fearfully and wonderfully made as you are,—what are you but living embodiments alike in your lower and your higher natures, and in the law of their union, of this principle of mystery? The power which feels and moves in your bodies eludes the knife of the anatomist as he lays bare each nerve and each muscle, that contributes to the perfection of feeling and movement. Yet how much more utterly mysterious is your human nature when we examine its higher aspects; when we analyze

thought, and personality, and the marvellous mystery of language, whereby thought takes nothing less than a physical form, and passes by means of a sensible vehicle from one immaterial spirit to another! Truly if it were possible to linger here, it would be hard to terminate this catalogue of mysteries, so extraordinary, so familiar, so near to us always and everywhere, yet always and everywhere so above our comprehension. But I forbear.

My brethren, you will pardon me if I say that to object to the presence of mystery in revelation is at least irrational. Surely, as we mount in the scale of being, we must expect an increase both in the number and magnitude of these hidden truths; and when we reach His throne Who is the Summit and the Source of all, we can hardly suppose that because He has deigned to lay bare to us the secrets of His Nature and the laws of His action upon our life, that His revelation will differ from that natural world which reflects Him in that it will discard this principle of mystery. Yet when it is no longer a secret objection against the doctrine of the Most Holy Trinity, or of the Incarnation, or of original sin, or of the Satisfaction which Jesus offered on the Cross, or of the efficacy of the Sacraments, that these doctrines in various ways embody, as they do, the principle of mystery; the soul has succeeded in casting down an imagination—an entrenched fortress—which too often exalts itself against the knowledge of God; it is, so far, in a fair way to bring its whole thought into the obedience of Christ.

γ. But there is a third line of resistance upon which the reason of man falls back in its opposition to revealed truth. It grants that a revelation has been given: it allows that portions at least of the revealed

truth are mysteries—mysterious still, although their existence is revealed. But at least, it exclaims, revelation shall not be dogmatic. If she is still to meet with public acceptance, Christianity must abandon the pretension to offer a fixed, sharply defined body of truth to the acceptance or rejection of the soul of man. Let the religion of Jesus only come to the men of our time as a finished poem; and they will read, they will learn, they will love it. They will not enquire too accurately whether it be literally true; nor will it put such force upon their thought and will as to make any violent or serious change in the natural current of their life. They will indeed be much as they would have been without it; and yet it will exercise a kindly, gentle sway over thought and society; it will breathe upon human character a soft, yet elevating influence; and if it exacts little intellectual homage, and exerts no tangible moral force, yet at least it will have the merit of provoking no keen resistance. Such, we are told, must be the religion of our day: intellect has condemned the principle of dogma, and religion is accordingly bidden to accommodate herself to the changed circumstances and imperious necessities of the time.

On close inspection it will, I think, be found that the dislike of clear doctrinal statements is only a disguised form of opposition to the truth which those statements embody. If, for instance, a man believes in the existence of one Supreme Being, he has no objection to saying explicitly that there is One God. It does not occur to him that in making that statement he is guilty of an intellectual narrowness, or of a want of perfect good taste; nor supposing him to be a serious theist, does he hold it necessary presently to balance his profession of belief in God by some other

statement which shall reduce it to the level of an uncertainty. Yet to say that there is One God is to make an essentially dogmatic statement. Every man who makes that statement intelligently, knows that it has a tremendous bearing on the belief of millions, alas! of the human race at this very moment. Yet the man makes the statement for the simple reason that he has no doubt of the truth which it embodies. If, then, he presently hesitates to say that Jesus Christ is truly God as well as truly Man, or that the Death of Jesus on the cross was a Propitiatory Offering for human sin, it is, I apprehend, because he does not believe the truths which are thus stated in human language. If he urges that a dogmatic statement is more or less unsatisfactory in that, owing to the imperfection of human speech, it leaves unanswered, or rather it suggests, many concomitant questions; I reply that this is no less true when you assert the Unity of God, than when you assert the Godhead or the satisfaction of Jesus Christ. If he dislikes dogma because, forsooth, dogma is the "stagnation," or the "imprisonment," or the "paralysis" of thought, I pass by the substance of his objection for the moment, only to observe that it applies to his statement that there is One God, just as much as to any other proposition in the Nicene or Athanasian Creeds. When he confesses that there is One God, he voluntarily renounces the right and the wish to entertain the idea of two gods or of many gods; just as when we Christians profess our belief in the atoning virtue of our Saviour's Death, or in the mighty regenerating power of His baptism, we renounce with all our hearts the desire to suppose that the Death of Jesus was a mere martyrdom, or that Baptism is a graceful, but, speaking spiritually, a useless piece of ceremonial.

In either case faith finds in the dogmatic statement its support; in either case unbelief can see in the statement which it disbelieves nothing but a fetter or a prison wall. Faith hails in dogma the regulation of its thought, not its stoppage, not its imprisonment, not its petrification; just as the mathematician finds in the axioms which are the base of his science, the fixed principles which guide his onward progress, not the tyrannical obstacle which enthralls and checks him. And unbelief decries dogma, not because dogma is really an impediment to faith, but because it is faith's true and trusty friend. The real crime of dogma is that it treats as settled and certain that which unbelief would fain regard as doubtful or false. If you believe a thing to be true, you have no objection to saying so; and when Christianity is warned not to be dogmatic, it is irresistibly implied, that however beautiful she may be, she must not assume to be absolutely true.

Here is the third "high thing which exalts itself against the knowledge of God" in this our day and country, namely, the dislike of fixed doctrinal statements. Observe that I am not denying that false dogmas have been and are proposed to the faith of this or that body of Christians. I admit that even true dogmas may be proposed by incompetent authority. But these are questions of detail; and the point before us is a broad question of principle. If with the Apostle we believe in the everlasting Gospel, we rejoice with him to proclaim its truth; nay more, when he exclaims, "Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed[1]," we answer tenderly, seriously, firmly, "Amen."

[1] Gal. i. 8.

Yes I understand, it seems to you severe, this last, this crowning exigency of divine Truth. Yet the prejudice against dogma is the last stronghold of the enemy; it is a position from which he must be dislodged at any cost, or your previous victories may soon be forfeited. Surely it is of little avail to grant that a revelation has been given, and even that this heavenly gift is replete with mystery; if no one truth revealed may be stated in terms as absolutely certain; if the point, the power, the effect of no one mystery may be presented to the vision of the believing soul. If religion is to be a practical thing, it must depend, not upon beautiful thoughts, but upon matter-of-fact certainties. Its truths must come to us in a form in which we can carry them with us, and bring them to bear upon our motives in the hour of temptation. When tempted we need something solid to fall back upon; not a picture, not a mist, not a view, not an hypothesis, but a fact. For eighteen centuries Christianity has responded to this supreme necessity of the soul of man, and we may be sure that if she had done otherwise, she would long ago have ceased to command interest at the hands of those who seek in religion, not an amusement for the passing hour, but a kind friend, with a firm hand, who will guide them through the changes and chances of this mortal life to the gate of that other world which we must all, in whatever guise, reach at last.

You may naturally ask, my brethren, what place in a Lenten course of sermons can reasonably be found for considerations so abstract, so apparently removed from the immediate and pressing wants of the penitent and struggling soul, as some of the foregoing have been. I can only reply by pointing to the actual circum-

stances of our own day, and especially in this place. Penitence presupposes at least a certain measure of faith; and faith is proscribed by that undue exaltation of intellect which leaves no room for it, and which denounces the principles of mystery and dogma. Before a man can kneel with a broken and contrite heart at the foot of the Cross of the Redeemer of the world, these high things which exalt themselves against the knowledge of God must be levelled, and his thought must be brought into the obedience of Christ. The great conflict which rages between the pride of natural intellect and the claims of faith, is fought out on no remote or imaginary battle-field. Every thoughtful mind, in this our distracted and anxious day, is the scene upon which these hostile principles engage in fierce and deadly combat. And upon the issue of that combat to many a man who hears me, may depend nothing less momentous than the salvation of his soul, and his place in eternity. There are many who are shielded from coarse forms of outward temptation, and whose passions have never risen up with impetuous fierceness to break the resolution or to mar the purity of their spiritual life. Happy, indeed, are such privileged souls; and yet it may be that their probation still turns upon the question whether or no they will make a sincere act of intellectual submission to the Reason, the Love, of their God. Assuredly the loftiest created intellect may submit to That Reason without degradation; the most blameless soul will need in its day of trial at the bar of Infinite Purity, the tenderness of that pardoning Love. A time must quickly come when the struggle which yet waxes fierce, will have ceased for ever: when the hopes, and watchwords, and theories, and enterprises which dazzle

the eye as it gazes on the busy tangled scene will have passed, with the generation which has projected them, into the silence of eternity. "And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down: and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the Lord Alone shall be exalted in that day[m]." Beyond the weakness and agony of the last sickness, beyond the darkness and corruption of the grave, there rises the vision of a Throne of judgment and of an everlasting world. Think of it well, brethren, and take your parts. Believe it, there is a submission of thought which is not slavery; and there is a haughty mental independence which, alas, knows itself to be anything but true freedom. They do not really suffer defeat who make their submission to God: they who, while opposing Him, seem to conquer, can win but a perilous and shortlived victory. On this side is Paul, first a persecutor, then an Apostle; and Justin, once a philosopher, then an Apologist and Martyr; and Augustine, who out of a sensualized heretic and freethinker, is raised by Divine grace to be a Saint and Doctor of the universal Church. On that side is Julian, Emperor and Apostate, with endowments of character and gifts of intellect so calculated to win our highest interest and admiration; yet ending a reign in which rare accomplishments, and consummate address, and vast political power had been vainly employed against the Gospel with the despairing confession, "Thou hast conquered, O Galilæan[n]."

Life indeed is too short to exhibit the full results of human action: but men frequently anticipate another world with a keen presentiment which is not less than tragical. Assuredly intellect has her rights, her privi-

[m] Isa. ii. 17.

[n] Theod. iii. 25.

leges, her duties, her triumphs. Yet faith gazes ever upon a sure inheritance, for which all else, if need be, may well be sacrificed, since all else will one day pass away. "God so loved the world, that He gave His Only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life[o]."

[o] St. John iii. 16.

SERMON IX.

The Conflict:—with undue Exaltation of Intellect.

ACTS xxvii. 11.

"Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul."

THERE are two testimonies borne upon earth, which run in parallel lines throughout its ages, and which, like all such lines, are never likely to meet; the one is, the testimony which the world bears in favour of itself; the other, the testimony which the Church, as the witness for Christ in the earth, bears, we need not say against, but concerning, the world. That the world beareth witness of itself, is at once sufficient to invest its testimony touching itself with suspicion. "If," said "the faithful and true Witness, the First-begotten from the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth [a]"—"*I* bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true [b];" how much less likely, then, is the world's testimony to be true, the testimony of that world against which Christ came to testify, when it beareth witness respecting itself. Nevertheless the world is in the habit of bearing witness of itself at all times, and under all the varying phases of its history. Occasionally, too, its testimony in favour of itself, its own ways and doings, powers and capabilities, waxes so clamorous and im-

[a] Rev. i. 5. [b] St. John v. 31.

portunate, as to jar upon the ear of the thoughtful as disagreeably as an unresolved discord on the ear of the musical; and notwithstanding its suspiciousness, as self-borne, unless the imperativeness of its reception is to be estimated by the loudness of its claim, the many who are importuned by it, feel bound to withstand it by some examination of its demands. Before we proceed further, therefore, let us see of what nature this testimony which the world bears in favour of itself, is.

I think you will have no difficulty, my brethren, in recognising the kind of testimony we speak of, if we say it is put in later, and especially in these last times, in this form. "You, students, theologians, doctors, Churchmen, teachers of Christianity, schoolmen, pastors, devotees, are not practical people; you are not men of business; you do not profess to be so, and if you did, we, men of the world, should very soon expose the unwarrantableness of any such pretension on your parts. We find you to be deficient in a large amount of political, economical, philosophical, and scientific knowledge: we therefore submit that there are many subjects as to which you are not competent to offer an opinion; that our judgment on all such matters is far superior to yours, and, as to such matters, ought to be abided by. In a word, it is for every one to keep to his own line of things. Do not meddle with affairs peculiarly ours, and we will not interfere with affairs peculiarly yours." I said, the testimony of the world in favour of itself, *is* put in this form. I am not sure, however, that I ought not to have said it *used* to be put in this form; that I should not have been more correct had I spoken of this form of the testimony as past, though not past very long, rather than present. Leaving this question for the moment, however, (for the world's testimony to

itself, as thus shaped, does not appear unreasonable,) the Church, the witness for Christ, if allowed to reply, would rejoin on this wise: "We will not dispute that there are subjects which you understand better than we do. We are prepared, perhaps, to plead guilty, collectively, though not so far as every individual member of the ecclesiastical body is concerned, (for you must not forget that mankind stand indebted for no small amount of knowledge, discovery, and invention, in independent departments of investigation, to men whose peculiar province was theology; indeed, had it not been for such, in the days that are gone, the stream of knowledge must have run dry),—to much ignorance in those matters with which you, men of the world, deem it your privilege to be thoroughly acquainted. Still, we maintain, that the principles whereby the course of the world is tested on our parts are more comprehensive than yours. We who are lookers on may be better able to judge than you who are actors. The testimony we give takes a wider range both backward and forward; and we, in our turn, claim to be heard by all who look beyond the present moment to the distant and portending future."

But, considering the characteristics of the age in which our own lot is cast, I fear it must be affirmed that the representation we have given of the testimony of the world in favour of itself is not an adequate one; that it is more applicable to the past than to the present. Nothing seems fairer than for the world to say to the Church, "Mind your business, and we will mind ours. We are competent to mind ours, and you are not qualified to interfere." If this were the sum-total of the world's testimony in favour of itself, if there the world left it, there would not, perhaps, be much reason

to complain. If every one thoroughly minded his own affairs, being thoroughly qualified to take care of them, the earth would be a much happier place than it is. But I am by no means sure that the demand of the men of our own generation goes no further than this. It seems to go much further. The world seems no longer content to manage its own affairs; it assumes an equal competency to manage "the things which be of God." It undertakes to remodel theology, to explain, curtail, eliminate, overthrow; to settle how much of the Gospel it will or will not receive; to decide what is essential in it, and what is the reverse; and to define what is absolute, by casting some of its noblest verities adrift. It is now no longer true, or if the assertion be reckoned too strong, we ask, *Is it* any longer true, that "he which is spiritual judgeth all things[c]," or that he that is political or commercial, scientific or philosophical, "judgeth all things," and divine things, "the things of the Spirit," included? That all men of average intelligence in the present age discuss, more or less, topics connected with "the world to come," is a fact with which no one can have any desire to quarrel. Such topics are matters of universal concern, hence may they well be matters of universal discourse; but these propositions are by no means identical with another, to wit, that the ability of each man, looking more to moral than intellectual ability, to settle these things for himself, is as universal. And how does the world seek to justify its claim in thus "thinking to change times and laws[d]?" It does so, by laying down a premiss which, if it were correct, would not, as we this moment hinted, sustain the conclusion which the men of the world would base upon it; how much less

[c] 1 Cor. ii. 15. [d] Dan. vii. 25.

if it be not correct? and at the best, we have little more than their word for it. What the men of this generation say in justification of their right to "judge all things," the things of Christ included, (and this is a form of the world's testimony in its own favour, to which we need scarcely call your attention, seeing how loudly and persistently the world does so,)—is, "This is an intellectual age, highly intellectual; the young are 'wiser than the aged' used to be, the people have 'more understanding than their teachers.'" I do not say it is not an intellectual age, but I *do* say that I should be much more disposed to believe in its intellect, if it did not so constantly take the trouble to remind me of it. What should we think of an individual man, who, upon all occasions, called the attention of his fellows to the fact of his own intellectuality? Can we have any higher opinion of the world, that "colossal man," for doing the same? "This is a thinking age." I do not say it is not, but I do say I do not believe it to be so in proportion to the loudness with which it is asserted. I have heard that it used to be very common for a traveller going ashore on the transatlantic Continent, to be accosted by a stranger, in divers places, with the remark, "This, Sir, is a great country." But would the traveller have been, think you, any the more impressed with the idea of its grandeur, from having received this unsolicited information? We trow not. In like manner, we are none the more impressed with the highly intellectual character of an age, because the men of the age so continually attest the fact. The fact may be as it is represented, or it may not, but the self-attestation does not prove it; and if it did, it is not all-important to the subject in hand. Intellect is not the only, nor is it the chief qualification required, in order to the under-

standing and reception of the truth of the Gospel, the Gospel itself being witness, and the experience of mankind corroboration. Still, it is impossible, in glancing over the columns of any daily or weekly newspaper, not to meet with phrases such as these, repeated to weariness,—"the judgment of the public, the opinion of the public, the good sense of the public," and suchlike: and with the assurance, in relation to some theological or ecclesiastical matter, it may be, that "the good sense of the public will never tolerate this," or "the opinion of the public will never submit to that," or "the judgment of the public will never brook something else." Language of this kind, again, is but another form of the world's testimony in favour of itself. In other words, it means, "See how intellectual, how enlightened, how clever, we are." Well, we do not say you are not so; that the public judgment is to be disregarded, public opinion contemned, the good sense of the public despised. *We* also are the public; the Church of God which is "a city set on an hill, and cannot be hid," is surely public enough. "This thing, O King Agrippa, the death and resurrection of the Son of God," said the great Apostle, "was not done in a corner." In remonstrance with these "great swelling words" we do but remark, 'Thou bearest witness of thyself, O world, and the likelihood is, that thy testimony is not true. "There is another that beareth witness of thee," even He to whom the Father bare witness, "and we know that the witness that He witnesseth of thee is true[e]." '

Now these same things, my brethren, which have been thus far set before you from the facts of the day, are "transferred to us in a figure" through the narrative, of which the passage with which we prefaced

[e] St. John v. 32.

our observations forms a portion. In this vessel, into which the Apostle of the Gentiles was put with other prisoners, under the charge of Julius the centurion, we have a picture of the Church and the world, quite as graphic as if it had been drawn but yesterday. While the storm raged outside the ship, we have the conflict between two testimonies going on within it, of which I have all along spoken; the testimony of St. Paul, the man of the Church, and the testimony of the shipmaster, the man of the world. Perceiving the danger that threatened them during their voyage, the Apostle "admonished" all whom it might have concerned, "and said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only to the lading and ship, but also to our lives[f]." His admonition, however, was to little purpose. He argued with men whose minds were made up. An antagonism immediately arose between his counsel and theirs. He found himself on an opposite side from theirs, even where the common safety of two hundred and seventy-six souls was in question. His advice, whatever it were, was unheeded. "Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul." Such is, as it ever hath been, the way of the world. The shipmaster believed in himself, and the centurion believed in the shipmaster; and all that were on board agreed to reject the testimony of the Apostle. If we could have overheard the consultation between the owner of the ship and the centurion, most probably we should have found them talking on this wise. "You and I, you know, are practical men; we ought to understand what we are about: but what can this Paul know touching navi-

[f] Acts xxvii. 10.

gation, and the perils of the deep? What right can he have to interfere with our peculiar business? We shall abide by our own judgment, and do not thank him for his. The public opinion of the ship's company is sure to be with us, and against him. We shall be none the worse for taking our own way." How much worse it could have been, we know not. It was as bad as this; —"they were exceedingly tossed with a tempest; all hope that they should be saved was taken away; they had to cast out the tackling of the ship; to throw its merchandize into the sea; the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape;" and the centurion alone, who had believed the master and owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul, willing to save him whose advice he had distrusted, kept them from their purpose; and at length, all that remained of this fine trading vessel, laden with the rich produce of Egyptian granaries, was a few broken planks[g]. And all this, because the spirit of the world enclosed in that chest of wood, and embodied in the centurion and the shipmaster, would not receive the unworldly testimony of Paul. "Sirs," said the "prisoner of Jesus Christ," as the dangers thickened around them, "ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss." True, the tentmaker may not have been fit to have been entrusted with the steerage of a vessel along the Adriatic; but, as the event proved, his advice would have been worth taking even touching "another man's line of things;" and that he had means of judging from a higher point of observation what was for the best,

[g] Acts xxvii. 18, 19, 38, 42—44.

which were denied to the centurion and the owner of the ship.

If from incidents like these we may infer the probability that the testimony of the Church may not be altogether valueless, in provinces not peculiarly her own, we may be the more convinced, that in provinces which *are* peculiarly her own, so far as she is a faithful witness for Christ, her testimony is "worthy of all acceptation," and that where her testimony comes into collision with that of the world, within her limits she is likely to be right, and the world wrong: and whether she be right or wrong, if a testimony have been given her by, to bear for, Christ, she must bear it. The world, we know, believes its own testimony concerning itself in preference to the testimony of any other concerning it. Like the centurion, it will "believe the masters and owners of its own ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul," yea, perhaps more than it would believe the things which might be spoken by the whole college of Apostles, were they on board. It is possible for men to believe everything but the Bible, to trust everybody but "the body of Christ, which is the Church[h]." Nevertheless the testimony of the Church is the same "whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear[i]." It is the same in an intellectual age, if so it be, as in an age not intellectual. It may be antagonistic to the world, but its antagonism is unavoidable, if the testimony of the world in its own favour be antagonistic to *it*. And its testimony is of that kind, that if it seem to be more antagonistic in an age which prides itself on being intellectual, (I do not say which necessarily *is* so, for were it so, would it not pride itself *less* on being so?) it is, because in such an age, it is

[h] Ephes. i. 22, 23. [i] Ezek. ii. 7.

needed the more? In a few words, the testimony is, "The world by wisdom knew not God[k];" and if not by wisdom, still less by folly. The testimony amounts to this, that intellect, of which men boast, is, as we have said, not the only, or the chief qualification needed for the discovery of divine truth. Some of the most pestilential errors have been promulgated by the most intellectual men. "Much learning hath made men mad," though it did not so, as Festus said, make St. Paul. Intellectual qualifications are needed to enable men to become really "wise unto salvation, through faith that is in Christ Jesus;" but if they be alone, whether with the teachers or the taught, both would be better without them. Moral qualifications for the investigation of religious truth are of more importance than intellectual ones. The state of the heart hath more to do with the acquisition, we do not say of historical or philological knowledge, but of the knowledge necessary to being and doing, loving and serving, than the condition of the intellect. "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching,"—not foolish preaching, but by the foolishness *of* preaching,—"to save them that believe." To the like purpose is this testimony, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them,"—not, observe, because of their intrinsic difficulty, mysteriousness, or uncertainty, not from the absence of civilization merely, or the want of educational advantages, but "because they are spiritually discerned[l]." A certain faculty, over and above other faculties, is required in order to the understanding of these "things of the Spirit of God," just as a faculty equally distinct

[k] 1 Cor. i. 21. [l] Ibid. ii. 14.

from, though upon a level with others, is required in order to the understanding of some natural art or science. There is but this difference between them, that while no man possesses a faculty for every branch of natural knowledge,—one obtaining a faculty in one department, a second in another,—the possession of the spiritual faculty is within reach of everybody who will but seek it, and endeavour after such a life upon earth as reason herself must convince us is requisite to its obtainment. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they," not the acute in intellect, "shall see God[m]."

Nor let us suppose that these testimonies borne by Holy Scripture, and the Church, constituted its keeper, are mere theological postulates, or obsolete canons of a distant time. They are the dicta of an Apostle, whose learning will not be disputed, addressed to a people whose civilization cannot be doubted. The why and the wherefore of such testimonies are brought before us in the present day, as in every other age, in a practical form. "The ministers and stewards of Christ's mysteries" cannot be, it would be hypocrisy on their parts did they pretend to be, surprised at the amount of religious ignorance there is in the world with the many who might, as it is said, and who ought, to know better. It is but too evident that multitudes are not taking the right way to know God, or themselves; that the course of their life is positively hopeless to such an end; nay, that it is hopeless to anything like thoroughness in the investigation of any other subject of study. We see men living in habitual disobedience to what little they do know; we are not surprised, therefore, that they do not know more; nor should we be surprised if what spiritual light they have, wise as they may deem them-

[m] St. Matt. v. 8.

selves, should, like that of the sun and stars from the shipmaster on his voyage to Italy, be shortly withdrawn from them. "The Church of the living God" cannot alter in their favour the testimony of her Lord, that "if any man would know of Christ's doctrine, he must do Christ's will[n]." She sees others sensual in their habits, the chief questions with whom are, "What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed[o]?" and to such she bears the same testimony. She sees others destitute of docility, strangers to anything like self-denial, pamperers of "the desires of the flesh and of the mind," and still her testimony to all such is the same. She sees others idolizing their natural gifts, instead of being sensible of the responsibility which they involve, if not turning their gifts against the Giver, and still her testimony alters not. "We have not so learned Christ; if so be we have heard Him, and been taught by Him[p]." The course you take, which you suppose is not at all incompatible with the understanding of "all mysteries and all knowledge," is not the course we took. Would you really understand divine things, you must take a different course. You must forsake your own system, or want of all system, and adopt ours. We had no royal road to this learning, and we are certain you have none. You must practise in order to know; you must become what you are not, to become what you should be. And we may be sure, dear brethren, that so long as men deceive themselves with the notion that intellectual qualifications are all that are required in order to the understanding of divine things, the delusion being accompanied by the assumption that they possess such qualifications, whether they possess them or not, (no

[n] St. John vii. 17. [o] St. Matt. vi. 31. [p] Ephes. iv. 20, 21.

one being allowed to examine their claims,) that the state of the heart hath little share in the attainment of that truth which is one with the life,—the Church need never descend from the height of this great argument to discuss the matter with the men of the world on their own level. In other departments the question is closed, the world itself being witness. In these matters, character, studies, pursuits, are taken into consideration: the poet is not encouraged to offer his opinion upon mechanics, nor the musician about chemistry, nor the painter upon navigation; why then should every one, though his moral state, his worldly pursuits, his habits of life, may be most unfavourable, yea, directly antagonistic to such a result, be held competent, by reason of some natural cleverness, to attain, just as he is, to that knowledge of God in which is life eternal[q]? Such knowledge is to be attained by every one among us; but certainly not by any, through the denial that there is any spiritual faculty requisite to ensure its attainment: or that, if there be, one course of life is just as efficacious as another to entitle us to its possession.

And what will the world, dear brethren, "do in the end hereof?" What will be the consequence of its determination to abide by its own testimony concerning itself, instead of by the testimony of the Church, witnessing for Christ, concerning it? Surely none other than happened to those, who on this perilous passage to Malta, "believed the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul:"—*shipwreck*. If the men of this, or of any other generation, will betake themselves to their own oracles, while they do despite to "the oracles of God;" if they

[q] St. John xvii. 3.

will put themselves under any director, and take advice of any counsellor, tossed as they and we all are upon "the waves of this troublesome world," rather than be guided by the pastors and pilots of the ark of Christ's Church, it is not difficult to foresee the result; and that result can be none other, take as favourable a prospect as we may, than the "shipwreck of faith" which will as surely be followed by bankruptcy of hope, and the extinction of love. The perils of shipwreck are known to the experienced navigator to be likely to overtake the vessel as she nears the shore: in like manner, the perils of the world, if we attend to the voice of warning in the divine directory, are likely to overtake her as she nears *her* shore, the termination of the present age of the Gospel. The world, for the elect's sake, escapes many a peril, but there is a last peril to come. The ship in which Paul was a passenger, having, contrary to his remonstrance, been "loosed from Crete," managed with difficulty to pass Clauda, only to be driven aground at Melita. And here again the testimony of the world is fatally at variance with the testimony of the Church. Christ tells us, so do His Apostles, that the world's last days are likely to be its worst; the world, that they are likely to be its best. She believes that her old age will be venerable for wisdom, He forewarns us that it will be venerable only for its ruin. He admonishes us of the world's downward course, she looks forward to an ascending progression in all that is great and prosperous. The conflict between these two testimonies cannot last for ever; it must come to an end some day; it must be seen, sooner or later, which is right and which wrong. Both cannot be right. But, in fact, the divergence between the two is just this. The world does not look forward to an end, while the Church

does. She believes an end to be determined; the world that there is to be no end, but that which is subject to her determination. The world regards her course as an eternal circle, the Church considers that it is a line drawing to a conclusion. The world saith, as it did of old, "all things continue as they were;" the Church, that all things *will not* continue as they *are*. The Church expects a crisis, a termination, a settlement, a winding up; the world expects no such thing. To-morrow, with the world, is to be for ever as to-day, and "much more abundant" in the treasures which most it values; to-morrow is with the Church the possible, and some morrow will be the actual, coming of the day of the Lord, the day of the "accomplishment of the number of His elect, and the hastening of His kingdom." But to the world "believing the testimony of its own masters more than aught that is spoken by Paul," the wreck and ruin of that day will be as unexpected as was the loss of the ship to its owner, on the Maltese coast. True it was, indeed, and a most consolatory truth, too, that every soul on board this ship where Paul was, at length "escaped safe to land;" but it was not for the sake of the shipmaster, who would not take advice, nor for the sake of the centurion, who believed him, that they did so, but for the sake of the Apostle, "the prisoner of Jesus Christ," whose testimony both had distrusted. He, as all God's servants, in all ages, was immortal upon earth, till his work was done; therefore did "God give him all them that sailed with him[r]:" and had there been instead of two hundred and seventy-six souls on board, two thousand and seventy-six, they would all have been saved, so long as "the Lord had need of *him*," sooner

[r] Acts xxvii. 24.

than that his precious life should have been lost. So will it be in the end of this age. Many there will be, who, for the Church's sake, not for their own sake, or that of the masters they followed, though too long they may have slighted her testimony, will "escape those things which will be coming upon the earth[s]," who, if left to their own skill and sagacity, could never have been "brought unto the haven where they would be;" themselves saved, though suffering loss.

[s] St. Luke xxi. 36.

SERMON X.[a]

The Conflict:—in a Superficial Age.

PSALM xxxix. 6, 7.

"Surely every man walketh in a vain shew:
Surely they are disquieted in vain:
He heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.
And now, Lord, what wait I for?
My hope is in Thee."

Or, to give the full meaning of the words, at the sacrifice of the beauty of the translation—

In a mere shadowy being doth man walk to and fro;
For a mere breath do they so tumultuate;
He heapeth up, and knoweth not who their ingatherer.
And now, Lord, what have I ever hoped?
My longing expectation—it is for Thee.

EVERYTHING in this world of trial has a twofold aspect. Everything, although evil, may, through the grace of God, work to man's true end, his salvation, and his life in God. Everything, although good, may, through man's contempt of the grace of God, work to the endless loss of that for which God created him, the blissful sight and possession of God, in the deathless death of separation from the love of God.

[a] I was not aware until just before this sermon was preached, that the Bishop of Oxford, who gave me my subject, desired that the sermons should be printed as a series. In consequence, I treated my subject not with any scientific exactness, such as an essay would require, but as I hoped would suggest useful thoughts to an intelligent audience.

Things, unfavourable though they be in themselves, may, by God's grace, be used to our salvation; things, favourable though they be in themselves, may, against that grace, be abused to our damnation. Natural dispositions, good or bad, outward circumstances, dispensations of God's providence, prosperous or adverse, may, and do, turn to either good or evil to us, as by His grace we follow, or by waste of His grace reject, God's purpose to us through them. God's judgments (it has been long observed) have been seasons of intenser evil of those persevering in evil, or of conversion and purification of those who used that grace of God which was offered to all. The concluding trial of the world is summed up to Daniel, "Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; and the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; and the wise shall understand[b]." The wicked, not understanding, shall do yet more wickedly through the same trial-times whereby the fearers of God shall gain purity and whiteness of soul, and purging away of dross. Nothing, alas! is more common than to see natural good run to seed, waste, even ally itself to evil; so that the corn-crop once so full of promise, unnourished by grace, ends, at last, in ears thin, withered, blasted by the east wind, as profitless as the darnel. The natural good becomes a source of self-deceit, in that the soul rests in it, and looks away from or condones its evil; and the result is a beautiful, smooth, unwrinkled surface, chiselled as by a Greek statuary, but as lifeless as his stone. Contrariwise, the hard outstanding natural fault, the rough irritable temper, at which people take such offence, may be God's instrument in keeping the soul low, itself to be the last conquest of His grace. What, alas! more com-

[b] Dan. xii. 10.

mon than that a graceful natural easiness of disposition is yielding, even to deadly sin? Moses' hasty, fiery temper, although it lost him Canaan, gained him that especial praise of God, whose grace transformed it into the "exceeding meekness[c]" above all the men upon the face of the earth.

We have all of us this blended natural evil and good in us; some—commonly some *one*—prominent disposition to good, which is the richest ore for Divine grace to sever from the dross, and yield pure and glorious, grace-enkindled, to the glory of God. And we have some *one* chief evil disposition, the "besetting sin," which is the chief instrument within us whereby Satan would ensnare us to our destruction, and corrupt all our good. And one of these two results must be the end of each, the grace of God penetrating the whole and leavening it, or the evil deceitfulness of Satan corrupting the natural good and making all evil.

This same blending of natural good and evil which is found in the individual, re-appears in the aggregate of individuals, in the nation or the age. We speak familiarly of "the national character" of all the nations which we know, each with its blended good and evil. (You will readily recall these several characteristics to yourselves). The successive ages in Europe have in such wise had each its own mark impressed upon it, that writers have characterised them, and given to each its name.

And, again, we ourselves, one by one, partake of the character of the age in which we live, as, on the other hand, we each, like so many drops in the huge ocean, contribute to swell it. Over and above our natural

[c] Numb. xii. 3, עָנָו מְאֹד.

character, we are, each of us, moulded in our degree by the character of our age. We are (apart, at present, from grace) other men than we should have been, had we, with these same natural dispositions, lived in any other century than that in which God has placed us. And self-knowledge has this double office to perform, to understand what we are of ourselves, and how we are influenced by that great world around us, of which we are a part. God the Holy Ghost has a distinct office to perform towards us, from that which He would graciously have done for us in any other age, in that He vouchsafes to give us grace, in reference not only to our natural character, but also as that character is directed both to good and evil by the influences around us.

Every age has its own natural good and evil; its good a help, by the grace of God, to good, and its evil an all-encompassing, ever-recurring temptation to evil, pressing in upon us, thronging us, carrying us off our feet before we are aware, ubiquitous, re-presented to us by most with whom we have converse, inhaled with almost every breath. Its good is an impulse, by grace helping us onward; its evil a miasma, out of which we cannot escape, poisonous, but, alas! pleasant. Plainly, all the natural circumstances, under or amid which we are placed, will form part of our trial, because they form part of our life: everything in this world, according as we use it, is "a savour of life or a savour of death."

But the most subtle danger of the spirit of the age is analogous to that, incidental to the natural good in the individual, viz. that it should form a character, in which certain natural virtues should be substituted for Divine grace.

It imports to us, then, much to know, what are the

natural advantages and disadvantages of the age in which we live: its advantages, because they are so many helps towards our salvation, if, by His grace, we use them rightly, and that we may thank God for them, and the less take them to ourselves, or think any good of ourselves for them; for plainly they are the less anything of ours, inasmuch as they belong to most around us: its disadvantages, for therein lies one special outward hindrance to our salvation.

Now it *has* advantages for our soul's good, that we do live in a refined, reading, intellectual, active age. Not, as I said, that nature can do the work of grace, or that, without grace, these same things would not turn to evil or be a snare to us, or minister the more fatally to self-deceit, or absorb us out of the atmosphere of grace, or hide from us God and the invisible; nor that some of our trials do not lie in them.

Refinement, of itself, may only blind us the more, because its sins are the more subtle. Its sins are more malignant, more deliberate, more unawakening, more directed against God, more diabolical. A man sins in them more, face to face, against God. Still, in a refined age, sin is not so much obtruded upon us; it does not so much seek us, if we do not seek it. It is veiled, and we need not lift the veil unless we will. We feel that we do violence to our consciences if we lift it. Then, again, shame may keep men from shameful sins. It is much to have shame on the right side. We shall think so, if we think of that "shame of a less shamelessness[d]," which becomes a temptation, when sin is openly and coarsely spoken of.

Again, the world's refinement is based upon Christianity, even though the world knows not of it. With-

[d] St. Aug. Conf. ii. 7.

out Christianity it never did exist, and could not exist; for it is based on principles which the Cross first taught —self-denying love, preferring others to self. Yet to act aright, in daily outward things, is a great help towards inward rightness. It is a beautiful body, unensouled indeed as yet by the grace of God, yet ready for Him, in His goodness, to breathe into it the breath of life.

Then, again, we should thank God that He has placed us in an intellectual or reading age. For cultivation of mind, although without the grace of God it would only sharpen an instrument for Satan, is in many ways very subservient to grace. First, it is a direct antagonist to the sensualism which is a vice, not so much of our age, as of our English nature, and which is, now more than heretofore, a wide-spread destroyer of soul and body. Our proverbs tell us of the antagonism between intellect and sensuality[e]. We see it in the countenance. That most delicate organ of God, the human brain, is directly injured by self-indulgence. There are marvellous ways in which some sorts of self-indulgence (which some here, alas! must know of) impair fineness of intellect, make memory less tenacious, bring a cloud over the understanding, cause a sudden collapse or snap in reasoning, mar the creativeness of intellect. The instrument suddenly gives way, because it has been, though not marred, disordered. (I speak of what I have been told of old by the sufferers.) Grace has so much to do for our poor nature, and we so shrink from its touch or from direct conflict, that it is a great thing to be able to arm our higher nature against our lower, as an auxiliary and servant of grace. It is a poor thing; but the struggle is for our lives, and we must be thankful for any shelter,

[e] "Dainty bits
Make rich the ribs, and bankerout the wits."—*Shaksp.*

however mean, and homely, and unspiritual, which God provides for us, so we can take refuge in it from the storm of sin. Our intellect is a present gift which God has bestowed upon us, which we cannot but value; and it is a good thing for us to know that sensuality is a deadly foe of our intellects as well as of our souls. For men flatter themselves that repentance will make all right about our souls, (God is so good,) but the injury to intellect is sensible, irreparable.

But this requires thought. Intellectual employments have this advantage, that, even without being directly religious, they raise the soul into a higher, purer, atmosphere. It is a great gain, when young, to elude the enemy, to fill the imagination with pure healthy thoughts, to distract the mind from subjects which would lead to sin. The proverb tells us, that "idleness is the mother of all vices[f]." Occupation, then, at least, cuts off the occasion of a whole brood of sins. It does not bring us within the sphere of grace, but it is an outward and powerful protection against sins, which would carry away youth as with a whirlwind out of it. Experience, I think, will tell most of you, that your busiest times have been the times freest from temptation. We have, then, great reason to thank God for having placed us in an intellectual, or, at least, a reading age.

Intellectual activity is one form only of the activity of our age; and every form of activity, which is not itself evil, is, although not connected with grace, a safety-valve for ourselves. Man's self is his worst foe; and, so far, everything is his friend which tends to take him out of himself. The habit, too, of activity is a preparation for activity in what is good or beneficial to others. We

[f] L'oisiveté, mère de tous les vices.

may mistake natural activity in good things for grace, all the more because activity is instinctive to us. Still, since sloth is a deadly sin, it is a great thing that its contradictory, activity, is nature to us. This channel for grace is at least unobstructed, ready to receive the life-giving stream of the grace of God. I have dwelt on this the bright side of our times, first, because it is truthful; then, because thankfulness to our good God requires it; then too, because gloominess is very disedifying, unennobling, paralysing.

But perhaps some of you may think that this which I have said about intellectual activity supersedes the necessity of any warning about that which has been assigned to me to speak of to you to-night, "The Conflict in a Superficial Age." On the contrary, it is the very occasion of that warning. True, discovery has been most active. It has seemed as if God had laid open to us His natural world, had bestowed upon us a new revelation of it, new powers and methods of decyphering it, and as if He meant to unfold to us more and more of the mysteries of His physical creation. We could almost imagine that there would be no limits to our discoveries, save that, being His creation, it is the finite expression of that which is infinite, and that we are discovering only a chain of causes and effects. The first principles lie as much hidden from our sight as ever. Still He *is* unfolding to us marvel upon marvel of His wonderful works. Thanks be to Him for every instance of His marvellous goodness!

But observe, the question is not about the discoverers, but about the "age," i.e. about ourselves, who are the receivers of the knowledge. And *we* may be superficial in two ways, quite compatibly with the brilliancy of the genius which discovers. We may be superficial in our

way of appropriating knowledge which it requires a wondrous combination of God's gifts to discover. Then, too, the nature of that knowledge may tend (of course through our abuse of it) to make us take up with knowledge which is very superficial to *us*, touching only the surface of what concerns our real being and our own souls. Our Lord has said, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" What then does it profit a man, if he gain the knowledge of the whole world and lose the knowledge of God Who made his soul, and by the knowledge of Whom his soul is to be saved?

Yet these are just the abuses which people are making of that knowledge which, in these days more than in those before us, God is so manifoldly unfolding to us. Its very manifoldness tends to make us superficial. Men pause on nothing, weigh nothing, have an opinion on everything. We think that we know much, because much is known. Yet what is all this doing with us, but forming a habit of imagining that we have an adequate personal knowledge of what we, for ourselves, know nothing?

The discoveries, also, are wholly as to things without us, God's physical creation. But of ourselves, the most marvellous mystery of that creation, whose life of grace is the study of angels, whose lower nature only belongs to the world of sense, who were formed in the image of God and re-created in the likeness of God made Man, whose union is with God, whose soul is His dwelling-place, what more do we know of the mysteries of our being, of the laws of our thought, of our supernatural life, of our intercourse with God, or of God's manifold ways of God's love and mercy with the soul? Men have closed almost everything spiritual to themselves,

every deeper thought of God, of their own being, because there they found insoluble mysteries, and *their* delight was in things which they could master.

I said, in regard to us individually, that one main peril is, lest we rest in that natural good which God endowed us with—lest we be content with the lesser part instead of the whole, with the cultivation of the natural instead of the supernatural, our natural selves, unspiritualized, unelevated, untransformed by the grace of God.

This same is the special danger of the spirit of the age, lest it occasion us to take up with natural beauty instead of holiness, with natural knowledge of God instead of Divine revelation, with a vague knowledge about God instead of a personal relation to Him and union with Him by His indwelling Spirit.

Look at the modern tone of morals. I speak not, of course, of those whom God has called out of the world, or of those who are daily living near to God, resting on the merits of Jesus in humility and meekness and self-abnegation. I mean, what is the ideal of the age? For it is "the age" which we are speaking of, "the age" which we are tempted to make our standard of the will of God for us.

I think I might without injustice (would to God it *were* injustice!) sum it up as decorous and amiable. This would include that outward refinement which I spoke of; unwillingness to pain one present, a certain kindliness, the avoidance of what would shock people's idol, public opinion, (such as would be, vice in any of its coarser forms, drunkenness or actual adultery, or flagrant dishonesty). Then, of course, there must be a general recognition of one's duty at least to one's neighbour, and so much of one's duty to God as is

involved in saying some prayer morning and evening (would God some real heart's-prayer, even if short, were always said) and going to church once, perhaps twice, on the Sunday. Men's end is to be comfortable with themselves, which includes that it should not go wrong with them hereafter. With this there must, of course, be a recognition that we are imperfect creatures, who habitually fail, although mostly as an anodyne to conscience, "We are imperfect, and we cannot help it."

But where, then, is anything which involves any real conflict with Satan or with self? What Scripture description of a life to God, in God, could men even think of as fitting to themselves? I do not ask as to our in any way fulfilling it, but only as to our setting it before us as a thing, by God's grace, to be fulfilled. How would the words sound, were one—I will not say in any place of amusement, but—in any domestic circle to name the words 'perfection,' 'devoutness,' 'self-sacrifice,' 'single-heartedness,' 'sanctity,' 'spirituality,' 'responsibility,' 'collectedness,' 'self-abasement,' 'contrition,' 'humiliation,' 'zeal,' 'meekness,' 'poverty of spirit,' 'hunger and thirst after righteousness,' 'prayer without ceasing,' 'thanksgiving in all things,' 'doing *all* to the glory of God,'—(I have not spoken of any of the austerer graces, 'self-revenge,' 'self-contempt,' 'self-mortification,' 'co-crucifixion with Christ,' of which St. Paul speaks; nor again of contemplation, meditation on God or on Jesus and His sufferings, communion with God, personal love for God, union with God, and that continually growing; nor yet, once more, of God's being "a jealous God," jealous that the love to Him should not be parted between Him and His creatures)—would not the words sound startlingly to the soul, as if they had belonged to a different being? And truly they do belong to a different

being. For men are, unconsciously, living mere natural lives, without effort, without aim, without struggle, without victory, without compass, without lode-star, crossing this perilous sea of the world, where countless souls are shipwrecked, without any consciousness of peril, or any desire except to escape unrespectable sins, such as any moderate share of the six deadly sins—pride, covetousness, gluttony, luxury, envy, anger; and an entire possession by the seventh,—sloth, as far as it is spiritual,—they hope, is not. Christians are leading natural lives, (except as far as habitual grace was, in baptism, bestowed upon them, and is kept feebly alive by listless prayers,) and the Christian's life is supernatural.

But where, then, is the Christian's nonconformity with the world? where his transformation? where his new creation? where his Christ-mindedness? where Christ's life in him? where "the fruit of the travail[g]" of the Redeemer's soul? to what end the indwelling of Christ? wherein is his sonship to God? what is sanctification? or what means being "a temple of the Holy Ghost," or "walking with God," (which the old patriarchs had before Christ died,) or the outpouring of the Spirit in our hearts? The higher, more penetrating requirements of God's law, the consciousness of sin as an offence against the will of God, (not as 'vice' only, or a defect in ourselves and an offence against our moral nature,) and the supernatural aids of grace as the antagonist of sinfulness and the enabler of men's weakness, have faded out of popular literature together. It is penetrated with an unconscious, simple-hearted Pelagianism, which ignores all deeper truth as to both God and man, because it has lived too much in the outer world of sense and its manifold interests ever to think

[g] Isa. liii. 11.

seriously of its own needs, or of God's ever-ready, ever-inviting grace, or of its own unintermitting relations and duties to God Who made it.

And so, in regard to what calls itself "the theology of the nineteenth century," it corresponds to this aspect of man. To *us*, to whom God has disclosed something of the nature of sin and of His awful holiness, the centre of the Gospel is His Divine, unspeakable mercy to us, His sinful creatures whom *He* made, whom we unmade, whom He redeemed and re-creates. We can never forget our own special relation to God. We are not, as yet, "like unto the angels;" we are "saved in hope" only; we are not in our home, but in an enemy's land. And therefore awe enters so largely into our relation to God. Our Lord has said to us, "I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear. Fear Him, which, after He hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear Him." What of the new theology? All which it proposes, which is not mere denial of truth, (hinted by some, avowed by others,) is a more graphic delineation of the outer circumstances which encompass the sacred history. To know the atmosphere in which David or St. Paul moved, is to shew men more the mind of the Psalmist or the Apostle[h]. Holy Scripture tells us of another haze which has to be broken through, than any supposed to lie on the history of the Jews[i], that we may see clearly the mists of earthliness to be dispelled by "the Sun of Righteousness." It tells us of another veil than the veil of time; the veil which lies upon the natural unillumined heart of man, which veil is to be

[h] "Theology of the Nineteenth Century" in Fraser's Magazine, Feb. 1865, p. 256. I took this the rather as a specimen, having been informed that its writer spoke of it as a sort of manifesto. I was able here only to touch upon a few characteristic points.

[i] 2-Cor. iii. 14, 15.

removed, not by the knowledge of some outward history, but by conversion of the heart to God. "When it shall be turned to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away[k]." It tells us of another ground of understanding or not understanding the mind of God,—whether a man have "received the spirit of the world," or "the Spirit of God to perceive the things freely given us by God;" whether a man have simply his natural powers, (be he, thus far, as highly gifted as God has ever created the keenest intellect of man,) or whether he be illumined by the Spirit of God; whether he would, of himself, know the mind of God and teach Him, (as men make their "moral sense" the interpreter of Divine truth,) or whether he "have" himself "the mind of Christ," being taught of Himself to understand Him. Pleasant is it to know anything which illustrates even the outward part of the Word of God; useful is it, so far, if by any means the truth of the sacred history be brought more vividly home to one who unhappily believes it not. Yet the knowledge of the natural can teach only the natural. The unhappy man[l] who learnt to believe the existence of Jesus only from the country which saw His mighty works, unillumined by His Spirit, unconverted by His grace, returned only to blaspheme Him. Better never to have known of Him! It was the nearness only of the unconverted robber who looked into that meek Face to blaspheme Him. It was the nearness of the rude soldiers who beheld "the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world" only to increase their own; the nearness of those who "spat in His face and buf-

[k] 2 Cor. iii. 16.

[l] M. Renan. "For the sake of this, 'to know Christ,' passages even in Renan's work may be read with instruction." (Fraser, p. 263.) Having read Renan, I cannot imagine which.

feted Him." Better far, not to have heard of the name of Christ than to delineate Him as the enthusiast deteriorating into the conniver at imposture.

The background of the mountains of Judah can throw no light on that sacred Form which went about doing good, suffering, speaking "as never man spake" among them. When those scenes, now hallowed by remembrance of Him to those who love Him, beheld Him present, "the Light of the world," they who "loved darkness rather than light," who were blinded by their imagined sight, hallowed those scenes the more by crucifying Him Who came to enlighten them. They shed the Blood which redeemed the world and sanctifieth it, as the common blood of a malefactor and a deceiver. The knowledge of human errors, which He came to correct, can cast no light upon the Divine truth, which He was, which He came to reveal, which He heard from the Father. He came to shine in the darkness, not to receive light from it.

And what light is He to receive from us? "The more fully it is understood what He was, what He did, what is meant by His life, by His death, by His resurrection, so much the more fully," we are told [m], "will the Church understand the sense in which He was Divine, and the sense in which He was human." This is to be the end of the new meditative study of our dear Lord's incarnation, life, and death for us sinners, that we are to know in what sense He, One God with the Father, "the Word," Who "was with God" in the beginning, "and was God," and for us "men and for our salvation" was made flesh, was God; in what sense He Who was Perfect Man was human. The basis of this new theology is to be, to unlearn our God-given faith; its development is, not to

[m] Fraser, p. 263.

expand but to destroy what God gave us. The denial of truth is to be the development of truth. The statement that future punishment is *not* everlasting is to the development of the faith that it *is*. Not-being is to be the development of being; death, of life.

And what is to be the end of this learning? In part, the simple words of God, to learn which needs no research, that "God is love;" that He, Who is the source and pattern of all perfection, is "a moral Being." O wonderful discovery of what every child can read in every page of the Bible! that God is holy, just, faithful, true, and alone good. And then, that He "is a righteous Judge, Who will deal with us according to truth." Strange Gospel for fallen man! "Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, O Lord, for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified." "Woe be even to the commendable life of men, if, laying aside mercy, Thou shouldest examine it[n]."

This, then, is the central superficialness of this age, and of what calls itself its theology, that it is so occupied with things of sense or intellect which do not bear on man's inner nature, that it forgets itself and its relation to God. It treats with God—nay, it would be truer to say, it treats *of* God—not with the tender familiarity of reverential love, but with the calm complacency of one whose rights God is bound to respect, and who is, on the whole, on good terms with God. And therefore it is false and hollow to God and to itself.

These two objects of knowledge, unlike as they are, of God and of ourselves, mutually condition one another. And that, in part, because God has revealed Himself to us, chiefly in reference to ourselves. To "see God as He is," is the reward of eternity: to "know as we are

[n] St. Aug. Conf. ix. n. 34, p. 179, Oxf. Tr.

known" is God's gift, when, by His mercy, we shall see Him "face to face." Now we see in a mirror only some reflection of His attributes and His love. But to see them in that mirror, our own inner eye must be cleansed; no breath of self must dim the surface which is to reflect God. The soul, which knows not itself, and has not, by the grace of God, purified itself, will not see clearly the image of God, which it has deformed in itself. "He that hath this hope" of seeing God, St. John saith, "purifieth himself, as He is pure." "We," says St. Paul, "with face which hath been unveiled," (*ἀνακεκαλυμμένῳ προσώπῳ*)—mind, he says not, with face which sees by any natural discernment of its own, but with face from which the veil, which intercepted the light of Divine truth, has been removed by another, that is by Christ and the Spirit of Christ,—"We, with face unveiled" by Christ in our conversion to God, "beholding in a mirror," no longer any reflection of our natural selves, but "the glory of God," are illumined by that Divine light which we behold; we receive in ourselves some of the effulgence of that glory which we contemplate; we are changed and transformed into that same image of God which we gaze upon; and that "from glory to glory," from one degree of glory to another, from one degree of transfiguring light to another; and that still, not of ourselves, but such as He alone can work Who is the Lord of the soul, the Almighty re-Creator, the Spirit of God, "as by the Lord, the Spirit."

This is a "progress" worthy of the name—a progress from one degree of Divine light to another, until the last perfecting on earth, the last sanctifying, illumining grace yields the soul, cleansed by its Redeemer's Blood, made meet for the unmerited gift of God, the eternal beatific vision of Himself. This is true illumining, because the soul is over-streamed by the light of God. This is true

freedom, because it is wrought by Him Who makes those whom He frees, "free indeed." "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty;" freedom from the darkening power of sin; freedom from ignorance and error and our own dull conceptions; freedom from prejudices, not from the light of the old eternal truths, but from our own short-sighted guesses, and uncertain speculations, and hasty prejudications of that truth which God IS and reveals, that we may be able to receive in unclosed minds the irradiating, transforming light of God.

Such is the goal, such the prize—deiformity; to be formed *by* God *for* God, into a likeness of the all-good God. But step by step. The first step is the cleansing of the soul. The first condition of the removal of the veil, which overspread the whole world out of God, is to turn to God. "When they shall turn unto the Lord, the veil shall be taken away." "To depart from evil, that is understanding [o]." Yes, dare to see thyself! Behold thy whole self, such as God will unveil thee to thee, some image of the knowledge at the great day; place thyself under the penetrating light of God; pray Him to exhibit thee to thyself, all which thou ever hast been, all which thou art, all which thou wouldest hide from thyself, under one ray of His Divine light. Do this, having first set God before thee, not as "the Deity," not as a "First Cause," but as "the living God," out of Whose Omnipresence thou canst not move; in Whom thou hast sinned; Whose supporting, enabling strength thou hast abused against Himself to sin; Whose love every selfish injury of another's soul has wounded in its tenderest depth; to Whose awful justice thou art absolutely responsible; Whose individual loving-kindness for thee, in every rejection of any known motion of grace thou hast despised; Whose temple in thee, if thou broughtest un-

[o] Job xxviii. 28.

clean thoughts into thy soul (much more if there was any sin in act), thou defiledst; to Whom, by any deliberate habit of sin, thou saidst in fact, "I will not have Thee to reign over me." Set God thus before thee, and, by His mercy, the Pharisee religion of the day will not again be thine.

Nor will God leave thy soul, from which He has cast out the Pharisaism or Pelagianism of the day, a blank. Rather, it will then cease to be a blank. He will take the pen of His Spirit, and write on thy soul His own ineffaceable inscription, "Redeemed by the Blood of God," "Redeemed by the Blood of thine own God." Then will all things take their due place. Then will thine existence cease to be "shadowy," for thou art sealed for eternity by the Blood of Jesus. Thine eternal life is begun. Then will the things of the age cease to be superficial; there will be no mere surface left, for everything will be filled with life, everything will have its endless end, Almighty God. Thou wilt shrink into nothingness before His awful Majesty, only to be re-created, enlarged, filled by Him Who fills the universe. Then will intellectual activity be empowered to range freely, not aiming, Phaethon-like, to snatch the reins of the horses of fire from its Father's hand, but circling in the God-described orbit round the eternal throne; not less free, but "free indeed," because it shall freely choose the good for which it was chosen, its free-will enfranchised, emancipated, disenthralled by Christ. Fetters are for the rebellious. God's service is "perfect freedom," freedom from one's worst tyrants, one's self, or the craven fear of man's opinion. Then will science range freely, unhurried to rash conclusions; intuitive, because in its measure inspired by Him Who is the Indweller of the soul, Whose enabling Spirit suggests every true thought, natural or supernatural.

O that you could know, O that you may know, how joyous, how glorious, is the liberty of the soul, enfreed by God; how magnificent the dignity is, throughout the common duties of the day, to have God for one's end. Nothing is irksome, nothing oppressive, nothing shallow, nothing heartless. For God ennobles everything, lights up everything, kindles everything with the ray of His love, which is at once Divine light and Divine warmth. Then thou shalt walk, not in a shadowy being, as this life would in itself, at best, be, but up and down with God; in God thou shalt take thy rest; with God shalt thou rise; with God converse; His wisdom shall be thy wisdom, His truth thy light, His love thy joy. And if this be the mirror, what the "face to face?" "And now, Lord, what have I ever longed for? My longing expectation is for Thee."

And now, my sons, go your way to this new world, upon which there stream beams of light from the half-opening portals of heaven. Christ looks on you, His soldiers; Christ looks to see your victories in His strength; Christ at this moment and evermore is interceding for you; Christ, Who will crown His own deeds in you, will Himself be crowned in you; yea, you who were once the travail of His soul, will be His glory and crown. Only [p], as you go, remember, for love of Him, those who, with you, were once made members of Christ; whom man's selfishness and animal passions have degraded; whom Christ has plucked anew, "brands out of the burning;" whom Christ is anew purifying by His Spirit to shine (with us too, as, in His mercy, we trust) with their own brightness, as His redeemed in the kingdom of His Father.

[p] There was a collection for a Penitentiary.

SERMON XI.

The Conflict:—in an Age of great Material Progress.

ST. MATTHEW vi. 33.

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

THERE are different kinds of material progress—as in wealth, in luxury, and in knowledge and command of material powers. Of these the two former are excluded from our consideration, by forming the subjects of special discourses in the present Lenten course. I shall therefore understand by the words "material progress," in the description of our subject, a progress in the knowledge and command of material forces.

Every one must admit that in this sense of the phrase, ours is pre-eminently a progressive period, and that consequently the question, How can the Church best maintain in such an age the conflict for her Redeemer? is one of paramount importance. In attempting to answer this question, it will be convenient to notice, in the first place, the spiritual dangers which arise from material progress.

I think that on attentive consideration we shall find that many of these originate in that absorbing and exclusive attention which is induced and apparently required for the successful prosecution of physical studies. Attracted to these at first, perhaps, by some interesting

speculation, the student finds in the course of his enquiry that he is insensibly lured on into an ever-widening field of investigation. For to one who has a taste for such pursuits their interest is unfailing. The mind, undeterred by the insoluble difficulties of metaphysical or theological speculation, finds its advance in knowledge sure and continuous. Effort is ever rewarded with success; the depression of temporary defeat only enhances the delight of subsequent discovery; and the excited spirit sees the limit of its horizon continually extend as it gains loftier and loftier heights of knowledge and experience. It is scarcely wonderful, in such circumstances, that all the powers of heart and brain should be concentrated on the favourite occupation, and that in the eagerness of pursuit or the intoxication of success, all other things should seem comparatively uninteresting and unimportant.

But however desirable it may be that we should work with all our heart and strength at what we are doing, it should never be forgotten that in all such special and exclusive devotion there is danger—danger lest the kind of truth with which we are familiar should be seen, and prized, out of its due proportion. And this is a very grave danger, for truth seen out of proportion as certainly leads to error, as desire and feeling indulged out of proportion lead to sin. Thus scholarship is a thing good and desirable in itself, but who would not condemn the pedantic prejudice which prefers minute accuracy of verbal criticism to solidity of judgment and greatness of soul? None are more ready to insist upon the proper subordination of truths in such a connection as this, than physical speculators themselves, and yet none seem more oblivious of its necessity, when the favourite subjects of their own study are compared with

others of paramount importance. Let it only be suggested, for instance, that man must be a more interesting object of speculation than nature, or that the relations of the soul to God must be more important than those of nature to the soul, and you will probably be reminded that, after all, man is a part of nature, and that it is far from certain whether the deepest relations of the soul to God may not yet be determined by physical investigations. And even when this conviction is not confessed, it is tacitly affirmed by the habit (almost universal amongst scientific men), of testing the validity of all truth by the application of their own methods, and the comparison with their own conclusions. For instance, they perceive in the physical creation the appearance of an unbroken order, that even the most eccentric and irregular phenomena are governed by law, yea, by a law which can be discovered and described by human patience and ingenuity. If, then, they are told of miracles, of occurrences which, while obeying a higher than natural law, and finding their determination in a deeper than natural necessity, yet interrupt that lower order of whose invariableness their own method of investigation had convinced them, they will commonly answer that such a thing is impossible, that they are so profoundly and unalterably convinced of the absolute uniformity of nature, that this conclusion is founded upon such extensive experience, upon an induction from such varied, such almost infinitely numerous observations, that they are prepared to assert of any alleged miracle, one of two things—that it never happened, or that it is explicable by means of natural laws, either now known, or hereafter to be discovered. It is thus that the crowning miracle of the resurrection is found to be a stumbling-block. Materialists recognise at once

that such an event can neither be explicable on any known law, nor on the supposition that an unlearned Jew of the first century could have so far anticipated science as to have discovered a higher than any known law,—and therefore its occurrence must be declared an impossibility.

Now what is the ground of this kind of scepticism? Why is it denied in general that any interruption to natural succession by means of supernatural agency is possible? Evidently because of the tacit assumption that there can be no higher forces than physical forces, no higher truths than physical truths, no higher interests than those of sense and time. For if there be—if the spirit of man be immaterial, having supernatural and eternal relations with God—then the laws which regulate those relations must be referred to a higher category than that of the laws of nature, and then also the operations of those laws may clearly be such that at special conjunctures of man's spiritual history, they shall interfere with the unbroken uniformity of nature. This conclusion is denied by certain scientific men, not because it involves the idea of disorder amongst the works of God, (for disorder there is none, where the lower law gives place, as so often in nature it does, to the operation of the higher,) but simply because it reduces physical truth to its due subordination, and proclaims that the natural is inferior to the spiritual. It is important that the Church should recognise this, for if she fails to perceive that the denial of the supernatural proceeds rather from the pride than from the discoveries of human wisdom, she will be in danger of denying indiscriminately both what is true and what is false in scientific conclusions. For the denial of the supernatural is the denial of her right to exist. She is built upon the

supernatural, and is sustained by it. She affirms as the very heart of her testimony the most stupendous miracle which the mind of man can conceive, not merely a temporary interference with the visible order of nature, but an incarnation of nature's Creator and Preserver. If she has any right to exist, it is because she is the spiritual body of the Son of God, because she is the temple of the Holy Ghost, because in her services and sacraments, as their life and power, there moves and operates a divine and personal Spirit. But if the supernatural be incredible, then these things are empty imaginations, then the Church of Christ is no better than an organized delusion, her life a morbid excitement, her hope an enthusiastic dream.

She cannot help feeling this strongly; and in the sense of an antagonism so direct and so deep, there is danger lest she should be indiscriminate, and therefore unwise and unjust, in her denunciation of the enemy. We have heard such denunciations already from some of her faithful but rash and uninstructed children. Because science opposes the Church it has been insinuated that it is wholly of the Evil One, that all its facts are inventions, and all its arguments unsound. But this is not just, because not true. Doubtless many surmises are put forward as facts, and many speculations as established doctrines, but still there are facts of science which cannot be denied, and arguments which cannot be overthrown. And because all that exists is God's work, wherever it may be found, and all that is true is God's word, by whomsoever it may be spoken, if we deny the fact or the truth we shall suffer, and shall deserve to do so.

But in opposing and denouncing the dictum of an arrogant science that the supernatural is impossible, there is no need to deny any of its established facts, or

to oppose any of its logical and well-founded arguments. For, as we saw, it is not upon these that that dictum is based, but on the altogether false and groundless assumption that there is no truth higher than physical truth. We have not, then, to deny the facts of science, but to deny for them that relative importance to which many have unreasonably laid claim. All truth, we allow, is equally true, but at the same time we insist that all truth is not equally important; and thus while admitting that physical truth has a right to recognition, we deny that it has a right to pre-eminence. It has become like the presumptuous guest in these latter days, and though we would by no means exclude it from the festival of God, we would say, in the presence of spiritual truth, of divine, of revealed truth, "Give this man place," and take thou, as is fitting, "the lower room." Spiritual truth, viz. those deep things of redemption, and of the individual realization of its power and peace, which God reveals by His Spirit to the regenerate in Christ Jesus, this truth is above the sphere of the natural; and it is neither to be discovered by natural methods nor understood by natural men. It is that "hidden wisdom," that "wisdom of God in a mystery," which is revealed unto us by the Spirit of Jesus, which "the natural man" receiveth not, yea, which by his own efforts he "cannot know," because it is "spiritually discerned." This truth is the highest truth, that which is of highest dignity, of deepest importance; and therefore our Divine Master has bidden us in the text to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness," reminding us elsewhere how little it shall profit a man if he gain the whole world, with all its wisdom, and wealth, and pleasure, if after all he lose his own soul.

We emphatically repeat this warning; but while putting the revelations of nature in their proper place, we

do not deny their truth or value. We know that in His precious parables our Divine Master made the common things of nature and of human life the symbols of the unseen and eternal, yea, that in the sacraments He sanctified them as earthly vehicles of the heavenly gift. And in this character and connection—not in themselves, but in their relation with the teaching and spirit of Christ—the sanctified heart will prize them. It will desire, grasp, keep nothing that is worldly, as it is worldly; nothing, that is, because it gives the pleasure, or fame, or profit which passeth away; but only because it is a symbol and sacrament of the unseen; because the green earth, with its rivers, and forests, and corn-fields, is quick with the life and radiant with the beauty of a world beyond the girdle of the heavens and seas; because the light of heaven gleams out softly or solemnly in its storms, and calms, and sunsets; because the life of heaven comes to us through all this created beauty, as through a natural sacrament, when the spiritual and the physical, the temporal and the eternal meet, in the sanctified receptiveness of a divinely imparted faith.

Again, if we thus clearly perceive the independence of spiritual and physical truth, or rather the dependence of the latter on the former, we shall not only be delivered from the danger already alluded to, but also from the powerful temptation to conduct the conflict against popular rationalism by the prevalent rationalistic methods.

We shall not attempt, for instance, as some are doing, to make spiritual things agreeable to men of sense by sensualizing the spiritual. For this were to cheat ourselves with names, and to betray the truth in defending it. We shall do no good to a carnal man if we first make the Bible fleshly, and then get him to accept it. For he

accepts it because we have made it speak his own words, and approve his own thoughts, and of course he remains unchanged by it. By such a method we shall reduce the wisdom of God to the foolishness of men, and lead them inevitably to despise revelation, as no better than a pale and imperfect reflection of their own feelings and thoughts. If we would commend to them the excellence of Divine truth, let us tell them plainly that the Bible has nothing to do with science; that it was not given to disclose things which men could discover by their own patience and industry; but that the things which it reveals are spiritual things, disclosures of the spiritual nature of God and of man, disclosures of the supernatural and divinely appointed conditions through which those natures can be brought into communion. This is the sole object of revelation, and as soon as the mind has distinctly perceived and firmly grasped this truth, it will be admitted at once as a necessary consequence that the intelligible forms and illustrations through which these spiritual verities have been represented to successive generations must be such, not as would most adequately express, but as would most easily and fully impart them. For the thing unknown, the thing to be taught was the spiritual truth, and therefore that intelligible medium which was to bring it within the sight and grasp of the mind, must be something well known and familiar; some form of thought, however absolutely inaccurate, which conveyed to the mind of the generation that used it such an impression as would facilitate the reception of divine truth. Thus the Prophet knew the impression produced on the mind of his contemporaries by the conviction of the earth's immobility, and he used that impression to produce the feeling of the Divine unchangeableness, without once asking or even thinking whether the popu-

lar conviction corresponded to the natural fact which it assumed. It was his part to teach not the physical but the spiritual truth, and in doing this to seize all those current impressions about visible and tangible things which would most effectually help him to his end.

There are those in this time who by the great mercy of God have been enabled not only to see this truth in occasional glimpses, but to grasp it fully, and hold it continually in possession. And these will never be tempted to conciliate science by rationalizing the Scriptures; for they know that the Scriptures are independent of science. They can be pleased, indeed, like other men when physical science brings to light some new and suggestive token of our heavenly Father's wisdom or beneficence, but they are in no danger, like other men, of worshipping the golden image which it has set up. For they see that it is working in a lower and humbler sphere than that of revelation; that at best and at most it can only discern more truly the exact sequences of physical connection and the more simple and beautiful rules according to which those sequences take place; while under these is the being and power of God; encompassing these is the eternity in which they move; over these, crowning and glorifying them, is the spiritual life, which flows from that God, and exists in that eternity. And seeing this, the faithful seek that better life as their peculiar portion. They seek it apart in earnest prayer; they seek it in the visible body of Christ, at every consecrated season of worship or holy communion; yea, they seek it everywhere, at home, at work, at worship, in the spirit of a childhood come again,—come again to them, after it had been left so far behind, with all its unbounded trust, with all its unquenchable desire, and in spite of the stain and soil of all those doubting, sinning, sorrowing years,

with something still, by the mercy of God, of its morning hope and purity.

And be sure that nothing less than this same distinct recognition of her position, and this same faithful effort to gain and preserve it, can enable the Church as a whole to do battle for Christ without fear of rationalizing concessions.

For there is still another danger to which she is exposed. If she should escape the temptation to degrade the nature of spiritual truth, she may yet seek to teach or impose it by an unspiritual method, or by the exclusive appeal to a natural faculty. I can perhaps best illustrate my meaning on this head by reference to a particular instance of unspiritual method and appeal. It is matter of knowledge to some of us, of history to all, how long Dr. Newman was tossed about on a sea of speculation, before he took refuge from the responsibility of thought and decision alike in a Church where neither is needed. Why was he so long restless? Why did he at last grow desperate, to the extent of committing what seems to us like intellectual suicide? It may be difficult to answer such a question satisfactorily, but I think that any thoughtful reader of Dr. Newman's wonderful and fascinating self-analysis will find the answer which he seeks in the unspiritual aim of all those struggles and speculations. Dr. Newman's great question is, Why ought we to believe? And he assumes everywhere that he will find the answer to that question by asking another, viz. What stress of external authority, or of coinciding probabilities will force conviction on the understanding? Thus, even when he has learnt from an eminent friend that "in matters of religion it is not merely probability which makes us intellectually certain, but probability as it is put to account by faith and love," he

feels himself dissatisfied with such an explanation. "It is beautiful and religious," he thinks, but "it does not even profess to be logical." Accordingly he leaves out of account the ethical and spiritual appeal of our faith, and seeks to construct out of the thousand cords of coinciding probabilities a spiritual cable of sufficient strength to bind down the rebellious intellect. This rationalizing method of enquiry continually re-appears throughout the book, and it surely indicates that with all his spiritual longings and intellectual acumen Dr. Newman never fairly recognised the fact that Divine revelation is an appeal to our whole nature, enlightened by the Spirit of Christ, and that it does not begin by addressing the reason alone, in order that having first convinced this it may through it coerce all the other faculties, paralyze conscience, compel emotion, and drive on as with a goad or a slave-ship the reluctant or refractory will. There must be no driving of any faculty at any stage of the process, for revelation makes its appeal directly and simultaneously to all the faculties of our nature, and its evidence is to be received not only because reason has accepted and approved it for the rest, but because each and all harmoniously consent and submit to it; not only because the judgment perceives it to be truth, but also because the conscience discerns it to be righteousness. And the revelation of God in Jesus Christ reaches even beyond this. It not only shews us that our relations to God in redemption are righteous, but further, that they are sublime, and tender, and beautiful; and thus while satisfying the reason and conscience, the story of redeeming love breaks up also the great deep of the spiritual emotions, and excites to a full and heavenward flow all the converging streams of trust and love, of gratitude and devotion.

It must be evident that a system of truth, so spiritual in its nature and so comprehensive in its appeal as this, can never be comprehended under any intellectual form, or completely embodied in any positive dogma. Considered indeed as a realized spiritual treasure, or even as a developed and connected system of truth, it must ever, in great part, lie within the Church, as Dr. Newman very beautifully says, "lying hid in the bosom of the Church as if one with her, clinging to, and, as it were, lost in her embrace." And yet, if this is to be true, we must not conceive of the Church (with Dr. Newman) as a special outward corporation of men, agreeing in the assertion of particular dogmas, but rather as of a company of regenerate souls, substantially linked together by the bond of a common life; and exhibiting and possessing that life more richly and deeply than any individual, just because the Spirit of Jesus lives and moves in it, with greater fulness of inspiration and greater diversity of action.

Well, then, my brethren, in order to maintain Christ's conflict against the world we must assert the dignity and independence of spiritual truth; and that our position may not be imperilled by an unspiritual method of defence we must further consent to no rationalizing adaptation of that truth to the demands or entreaties of the flesh. I repeat we must assert the distinctive nature of revealed truth, and seek only to learn and to teach it by spiritual means, praying as learners for the spirit of knowledge and understanding, and as teachers for the mighty co-operation of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.

And while we thus seek to keep the truth, and to impart it, let us not forget, with faithfulness, and if need be with sternness, to rebuke and denounce its opposite.

We cannot be faithful to the truth, if we are indulgent to error; we cannot be loving to the souls of men, if we tolerate that which is destroying them. Acknowledge all that is true in error, but denounce all that is erroneous in truth; acknowledge all that is good in the evil, but denounce all that is evil, even in the good.

I fear that in our time there is special need for this loving faithfulness. For we see everywhere the form of a religion which is no more like Christianity than the lamb-like beast of St. John's vision was like the Lamb. It delights to call itself a rational Christianity, a Christianity purified from all superstition and enthusiasm, but it is lamentably evident that it is a Christianity without revelation, without spirit, without a living and reigning Redeemer; which is horrified at nothing so much as at the reproach and foolishness of the Cross, or at the thought of a life of the sanctified, which is hid with Christ in God. Do we not hear the voice of this bastard Christianity, in the strain of those godless and clever writers who supply so much of the matter of our periodical literature; in their ostentatious laudation of the old classical religion and philosophy, in their open avowal that "the world" as a term of reproach has no longer any meaning, and above all in their undissembled rejoicing, that though some special and spiritual development, like Christianity, may repress the natural instincts for a time, yet that these are now proving once more that they will always get the victory in the end? Is not godless anti-Christian wisdom thus already preparing the worship of blind instinctive feeling, of blind destructive force? Yea, and can any of us be prepared to say how far the fashionable pantheism may push this nature-worship, to what worse than Egyptian folly, and worse than Corinthian licentiousness it may one day proceed,

when, as it hopes, the protest of Christianity shall be all but drowned in ridicule, or quenched in blood? The earth already trembles beneath the advancing footsteps of Antichrist; and surely, then, we have but one duty as we mark the sure signs of his approach, viz. to oppose him with all our strength, and to denounce him with all our energy, as the minister of Satan, and the destroyer of our brethren. Have all Christ's pity for his miserable and deluded victims, and seek their salvation with all Christ's tender and untiring love, but declare war to the uttermost against that wisdom, "earthly, sensual, and devilish," which is the offspring of Satan, the enemy of Christ, and the inheritor of those everlasting burnings which shall consume alike the instruments and agencies of evil.

And for ourselves, meanwhile, in these dark and dangerous days, let us seek for strength and comfort in the nearer and deeper communion with our Lord. And when in our darkness and solitude we feel Him by our side, when we see the pitying face of the Good Shepherd in our forlornness and loneliness, yea, when we feel the tender Arms beneath us, gently lifting us up from our prostration—gently, but oh, so mightily, then lean back on their Omnipotence and be at peace;—then go forth in the strength of that Divine upbearing, and address yourself peacefully to your daily task, assured that if you are successful, it is of His goodness, and that if you are unsuccessful it is of His goodness still;—to force you inward, to the more earnest seeking for that eternal treasure which is your all, yea, and which suffices though every earthly blessing were removed, and you were left alone in the wilderness with your Saviour's presence and love. Oh, seek to know Him thus in His tenderness and power, in His sympathy and life, and

then will you be mighty to wage your Master's conflict upon earth; then the highest and the lowliest man will gladly listen while you tell of what you know; yea, will reverently watch while in your humble Christian life that glory shines which never science caught from sky or sea—that heavenly light, which like the lambent glory on the prophet's face, reflects the majesty and tenderness of Christ.

SERMON XII.

The Conflict:—in a Money-getting Age.

ST. LUKE xii. 15.

"A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

THERE is no sight, my brethren, which seems to me more fearful, none which more teems with mournful thoughts, or leads the mind to augur more grievous things for the future of our Church and country, than that continually increasing western portion of our huge city of London, the habitation of the rich and great.

Take a walk any afternoon during what is called "the season" among the haunts of the fashionable world. Watch the stream of carriages, with their gorgeous freights, the statuesque servants, the sparkle of gay attire, the riders, the lookers on, all perfect in their respective ways. Count these as, in majestic self-composure, and with a due sense of their own magnificence they pass you by. Linger till the last is gone. Then as the soft summer evening closes in, saunter among those squares and rows of palaces which environ you on every side. Look up at those noble mansions, strong, well-built, lofty, on ground of almost priceless value. Glance, as the bright lights stream through the windows at the statues, pictures, marbles, with which each room is filled. How costly, how rare, are all things! There

feasting is daily, and poverty and want are unknown. A little later, and once more the carriages are thronging the streets. Once more they are bearing their stately occupants. Dresses, very marvels of costliness, gold, jewels, ball-rooms fragrant with choicest flowers, music in ceaseless thrills and bursts, these are everywhere, and the all but unceasing round of pleasure will last on until night has fled, and the grey sober tints of morning are once more bathing the earth. Here is no exaggerated picture. Every one, as I think, among us will recognise its truth. And this is what has grown up among us—widening, strengthening, becoming more and more the defined, accepted, natural rule of life during the last twenty years. And what, I pray you, is the tale which all this tells? *Whence* is it? What enchanter's wand has wafted all this splendour and magnificence to our once sober, frugal land? The answer is very simple. It is merely one small expression of our enormous, incalculable WEALTH.

Look at it in this way, and it is really marvellous. Strive to appraise, however roughly, the scene which I have described. What is the cost of that diorama which has just flitted past our eyes? Take, if you will, a single carriage—a type of all—picked out at random, neither better nor worse than others. The worth of that single carriage and its horses is scarcely less than £500. The dress of its four occupants has cost £200 more. Add the value of the servants' clothing, and the wages at which they are hired. Multiply these by the number of carriages which pass by, and you will find that since first you stood watching there you have gazed on an expenditure of not less than £500,000.

But how shall we estimate the value of those houses, with their furniture, books, pictures, jewels? Of the

sumptuous festivities which never cease? The mind fails before the calculation. Millions will not reach it. And observe, further, that this is not the wealth of one or two, but actually of thousands. Each of these houses tells its own story. In each of them, increasing as they do in number continually, there dwells—for none other can afford to dwell there—a very wealthy family, with all its adjuncts and attributes[a]. Nor is this to be found in London only. What London is, in their degree hundreds of places are. Go up and down the land almost where you will. Look at the exquisite paradises of country-houses, scattered here and there in every neighbourhood. Everything there, too, is perfect and well appointed. Conservatories, horses, furniture, all are on the same scale of absolutely stintless excellence. No one lacks the means to carry out what are called improvements, or to purchase luxuries and ornaments of every kind. If wanted, it simply comes. Or wander into our other great commercial cities, our Liverpools, Birminghams, Manchesters, and the like. *There* truly is less outward show. Men pique themselves on living quietly, without ostentation, but the *wealth* is there. Every now and then, indeed, the report of a startling 'failure' jars our ears. But the very extent of the failure in some sense points to the mighty wealth of the land, and on the whole such misfortunes are few and far between. Rather we may say that tradesmen thrive, that debts are paid, that fresh fortunes are every day mounting into notice, in a word that the riches of the country increase in a ratio altogether beyond human foresight or calculation. Take one single mark, which may be called a certain test, the

[a] In a late article in the "Times" newspaper, it was calculated that the valuables of London which are exposed to the risk of fire, are worth not *less* than £900,000,000.

income-tax. It is well known that one penny paid in each pound of the income of the country, added or subtracted, makes a difference to the national revenue of upwards of £1,000,000. But the income-tax, remember, is paid only by those whose income is more than £100 per annum. Then if this be so, the income of England, over and above that of those which we may call the working classes, must amount to at least £250,000,000 per annum, and probably to nearly £300,000,000. And this, enormous as it is, is steadily increasing year by year, and spreading up and down the various portions of society. Surely, then, we may well employ the language of our prescribed course of subjects, and term this age, in which it has pleased God to cast our lot, a "money-getting age." This is in reality no libel. Rather it rejoices in such a title. Commercial enterprise, successful speculation, prosperous investments, lucrative employment, are words in the mouth of every one. Every position or labour is more or less tested by this. More and more, if we are rightly informed, men are passing from the old liberal professions to engage in something which, however far less ennobling and intellectual, will yield a more solid return. More and more the highest and completest forms of education of the mind and heart, as we have been used to consider them, are discarded for some rapid means of arriving at wealth. The god of this generation, it has been well said, is the golden calf. Give wealth, men would cry, if only they spoke their real minds, and all is ours. Give us wealth, more "riches in possession," and we shall enjoy life, have peace, power, rest. Give wealth, and we crave for nothing more. This is all in all. Let us but turn that sum which we have set before us as our goal and object, and thenceforth we shall be free

from care, we shall do as we will, be respected and admired by all—nay, this earth shall be as heaven.

For this, as we see continually, all else is sacrificed, sometimes even life itself, and, at least, all that makes life worth living. Pass into the great marts of commerce. See those anxious careworn countenances. Look into those lives spent in the midst of dust and smoke. Learn somewhat of their real history. Examine what are technically called their "transactions." Will they bear the light? Are they not continually tainted with sharp practice, or, in other words, low cunning, unscrupulousness, hardness, cruelty, deep-rooted selfishness? Is it not true, that when men's hearts are full of the desire of gain, there is literally no room for anything else? It is absolutely a passion, and carries them clean away, till the love of truth, the hope of heaven, almost the faith in a God, prayer, natural affection, charity, become to them simply as so many absurdities, weak meaningless follies, unworthy of a man of sense. Then, to complete the evil, men boldly argue in favour of such views as these, claim riches as the only object of a nation's existence, test all by this. 'Give this,' they would say, 'and in return take all. Take from us, if it need be, honour, courage, liberty, influence, nobility of feeling, "all that is lovely and of good report," but give us commercial success—in other words, the opportunity of making money freely.' Is not this the language of some of our best-known statesmen, whose eloquence and earnestness move the nation's heart? It is their deliberate conviction that money is worth all beside.

Alas, my brethren, this is indeed miserable teaching, unworthy of a man, still more so of a Christian man. Such teaching even heathens rebuke, as he who said "the gods lack nothing; he therefore who lacks the least

is nearest to the gods[b]." Miserable faith which is centred on that which, like all earthly things, must needs perish in the using! Miserable love, which rejects the noble and the pure, the spiritual and the heavenly, the great eternal principles on which souls are stayed, for that which, gained, cannot abide, and which, after all, "satisfieth not!" Is this the political economy of the Gospel, the teaching of Him Who came to "seek and to save the lost," to "turn men from dumb idols to serve the living and true God?" How does He rather contrast the mere crumbling, perishing riches on which men set such store, with that which they cast away! "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where the rust and moth doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where neither rust nor moth doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal[c];" as though He said, 'The trouble and the labour with which you set yourselves to gain these miserable, passing earthly riches are really so much wasted pains, occupying your thoughts, and hindering you from winning what might otherwise be yours, even the "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."' Or again, how terrible is that picture which He draws of him—*the* rich man, Dives, as we call him—"clothed in purple and fine linen, faring sumptuously every day;" then, in the midst of all his "wealth" and splendour, dying, passing into utter despair and ruin, lifting up "in hell, being in torments," those eyes which had so lately feasted on all that this world could shew of gorgeous and refined and beautiful! And wherefore? Who may not tremble at the words which explain the cause?—"Remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things." Supplement this with that

[b] Xen. Mem., I. vi. 10.

[c] St. Matt. vi. 19, 20.

scarcely less terrible history of the other rich man—him whose ground "brought forth plentifully,"—our Lord's warning against *covetousness*. As Dives *enjoyed*, as men say, his riches, so he, the other, *kept* them to himself, made the most of them, turned them to the best advantage. This seems to be the one sin which ruined him. For all we know, he was an honest man, as the world counts honesty. He paid his labourers the agreed-on pittance. He could, as it is said, look every one in the face. And now, as it happened, he had a good year, and had done remarkably well. It was doubtless a matter of much congratulation. Probably he had met his neighbours in the morning, after the amount of his crops had been ascertained, and had told them of his good fortune, taking some credit to himself for cleverness and skill in farming and managing. And now, before he goes to rest, his heart is naturally full of it all. "He thought within himself," till his thoughts formed themselves into a soliloquy, "saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods." Now really when one reads so far, it is impossible not to feel that unless our Lord Himself had distinctly marked out this character for reprobation, very few would have perceived that the man had done wrong at all. What could be more natural, they would ask, than that he *should* make arrangements for the accommodation of the vast increase of his wealth? Why should he *not* make the most of what he had? Why should he *not* spend time and thought on a matter of so great importance? Alas, this is exactly what our Lord calls "the deceitfulness of riches." "Some sins are open beforehand, going before to

judgment." Every one admits their sinfulness. It is not so with riches. Neither the possessors of riches nor those about them perceive in them danger, or the possibility of sinning in their use. Often rich men actually know not that they are rich. There is a respectability in being rich which masks a hundred forms of evil. Most of the sins which are admitted to be sins are such as are injurious to society. But the habits which wealth brings are exactly those in which society most delights, and therefore no warning voice, no hand of chastisement, are lifted against the selfishness, unthankfulness, self-satisfaction, vanity, pride, which follow too often in the train of riches. Against drunkenness, dishonesty, falsehood, and the like, we all hold up our hands and eyes, but *these* may pass. Thus was it doubtless in the case of him whom Holy Scripture calls "a fool." Probably he was one of a large class—quiet, inoffensive, regular in their ways; attendants at their parish church, possibly even communicants, often holding Church offices, giving their guinea or two yearly in subscriptions to one local charity or another. But his property kept on turning over and over, and what was he to do with it? He could not burn it; no one in his senses would expect him to *give* it away; it never occurred to him that there was any reason for special thankfulness; and therefore he merely acted as most people would have acted under similar circumstances; he made his plans—and good plans too—for hoarding it up, and making the most of it. Who would blame him?

My brethren, *this* was the man whom God calls "a fool," and this his great success, his prudent forethought, was in fact the crowning act of his long-continued life of guilt. It was his last trial, his absolute and complete failure. "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee:

then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" And to this our Lord adds the general conclusion, "So," that is, even like this rich fool, like him in his guilt, and like him in his punishment, "is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God." And then follows that most striking command to His disciples, so difficult, nay impossible to explain on any commonplace modern religious principles of explanation,—"Therefore,"—because it is so very dangerous to grow rich, because riches are so likely to distract your mind and separate you from God, and lead you to rest on them,—"therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body than raiment. Rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.... Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not;... for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." 'If you make riches your pleasure, if you think a great deal about them, if you value them as the world values them, namely, above all things whatsoever, you will then be giving your heart to them. But your heart is God's. And if you do indeed give your heart to other than God, then, little as you may imagine it, you do, in fact, choose to yourselves another than the true God.' "Covetousness," the earnest longing for wealth, is actually "idolatry," the worship of another God. "There came," we read, "one running" and kneeling to Jesus, and asked Him, "Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Carefully he had kept the commandments, "even from his youth." His life had been pure and innocent. "Jesus beholding him loved him." Then came his trial. He

Who knoweth the heart perceived in him one great defect which even marred all. It could be overcome by nothing save a complete and painful purging. "One thing thou lackest; go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up thy cross, and follow Me." It was indeed a wondrous call, opening the way to we know not how great and glorious service. The voice of Jesus was sounding in his ears. His Holy Spirit was mightily searching out his heart. There was doubtless a bitter struggle. But all is unavailing: his love of riches overbore and neutralized all. "He was sad at that saying, and went away grieved, for," the Evangelist adds, as though his departure from Jesus were a natural result, "he had great possessions." Then again does our blessed Lord sound the note of warning, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!"

But surely even beyond all this weight of solemn words stands forth the teaching of our Lord's own example: "Is it not," as the Apostle calls it, "the *grace* of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He were rich yet for our sake He became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich?" "He became poor." My brethren, what a thought is this! The Lord of heaven, God the Almighty, the All-rich, the All-possessing, *chose*, when He came among His creatures, to come as a poor man. He Who is in the form of God, "took upon Him the form of a servant." Earthly poverty, in the fullest sense of the word, He accepted as His own. Born more hardly than the very poorest peasant among us, even in a stable, cradled in a manger, brought up in a poor mechanic's cottage, His food rough barley loaves, His sleeping-place ever uncertain, His disciples poor men like Himself, hard-working fishermen—finally, stripped

of His very garments, and left absolutely naked, to die! Surely, if riches and possessions were indeed the highest end of man's being, He who came to restore man to dignity and happiness would have come among us rich and great. So far as our human minds can fathom, the work of our salvation might have been accomplished by one who was rich in earthly things, as well as by One who was poor. The Sacrifice might still have atoned. It is even possible to imagine an aspect under which the contrast of the Sacrifice Itself would have been heightened, had a rich man rather than a poor man died for his fellow-men. Yet, at a time when riches and the good things which riches procure abounded in the world, He chose, deliberately and willingly chose, the lot of the poor, and is among His own creatures "as He that serveth." All "the kingdoms of the earth, and the glory of them," He deliberately cast aside. And since, indeed, He, the typical Man, the Head of the new Creation, the "Firstborn of every creature," chose thus to be stripped, and bare, and poor, does He not, I pray you, teach this lesson, that the highest condition, the very perfection of man's nature is even such as this? Nay, more. I hesitate not to say that from the moment Christ came thus among us, poverty—yea, poverty—has its own special blessings. Even as infancy is blessed, because Christ was once a little child; as manhood is blessed, because He grew to man's estate; even as death and the grave are blessed, because He passed through them, and took them to Himself; so in like manner, because He was poor, poverty has a blessing which riches can never have: "*Blessed* be ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God." 'That kingdom of God which the rich shall hardly enter lies before you. The road to *you* is clear. Ye have but to take posses-

sion.' "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him?" But "Woe to you that are rich, for ye are receiving your consolation!" 'If the husks which the swine did eat are satisfying and consoling you, then, woe to you, for your eternal loss!' "They that will be rich," says the Apostle, "fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil, which, while some have coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

Surely, then, the work of the Church of Christ, in the midst of a money-making, money-holding, money-spending generation, is to spread this teaching through the world, to bring men fairly to book, "to the Law and to the testimony." *You* think it great and blessed to be rich: so does *not* Christ. *You* think money and the making of money the great aim and end of life; Christ, on the contrary, calls Perfection the "selling of all;" the "giving to the poor," the "taking up" of the bare, hard "Cross" and "following Him." *You* see in riches security, rest, peace. Holy Scripture calls them "uncertain and dangerous," and specially bids us *not* to trust in them. This is, I say, the teaching which Christ's Church is *bound* to sow broadcast through society. This is one portion of that His conflict with the world, which having in His own person waged and won, He leaves to His Church to carry on. In poverty, in abnegation of all earthly riches, He marches, as it were, in front, bearing His Cross. And now He calls on us like Him to follow; to fall, in our generations, into the ranks and fight. "He has left us His example, that ye should

follow His steps." As He bore witness, as He fought that good fight, so must His Church bear witness, and fight even now and to the end of the world. And thus, even as He, her divine Master and Head, taught, so she, too, teaches by precept and by example also. Continually she warns the rich that they "be not high-minded; ... that they do good; that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." Solemnly, before her great Eucharistic service, she cries in loud accents, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he reap." "To do good, and to distribute, forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." "Give alms of thy goods, and never turn thy face from any poor man; and then the face of the Lord shall not be turned away from thee." Earnestly she asserts the claims of Christ's poor, Christ's little ones, Christ's ministers, the heathen abroad, and—alas that we should have to say it!—the heathen also at home. Would that there were among us a real, sincere, adequate response! Would that out of those many millions, out of that boundless wealth, say but one-tenth were offered to the Bounteous Giver! Alas, alas, when one reads the miserable pittances scarcely wrung from reluctant and contemptuous, or careless hearts; when one hears in all directions of works dried up or dying out for lack of means to carry them through—of souls perishing, little children left to rot in vice and filth, of hospitals and infirmaries forced to restrict their blessed work of mercy; when one sees the wretched hovels in which Dives thinks it good to herd Lazarus and his sons and daughters,—and then when one takes that walk through

the parks and wealthy thoroughfares of our great metropolis, how can the heart but dwell on the awful words of St. James, "Go to, ye rich men, weep and howl for the miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last day."

And yet, thanks be to God, there are ever among the Church's children those who hear her voice; those who, like the Lord Himself, go forth "bravely without the camp," leaving and despising the stirring well-to-do world and "bearing His reproach." In all ages the Church has confronted the world with such. There have ever been those in the Church who have loved and chosen a life of poverty and self-denial, who have shrunk from even touching the "unrighteous mammon" as "the accursed thing." "I," says St. Augustine, "have ever loved the Perfection of which the Lord spake, when He said, 'Go, sell all,' and not in mine own strength, but by His grace aiding me, I have so done; and to this I exhort others also, and I have partners in the Lord's name, who, through me, have been persuaded to do the same." And are not these the men who have overcome the world, they who have utterly rejected every portion of the world's offers, whether "the lust of the flesh," or "the lust of the eye," or "the pride of life,"—who have simply spurned these from them, that they might be free to follow Christ? Bernards and Xaviers, Martyns, Mackenzies, Whyteheads, Kens; how touching to search into the secret history of such as these—men who moved that world, which was not worthy of them; each of whom, though dead, yet speak-

eth; to watch their perfect peace and joy; to mark their mighty power over their fellows, and to know that they loved and chose for themselves absolute and complete poverty.

And surely, among many notes of alarm which well may startle us and call us without delay to man our Sion's walls, there are at least two which speak to us of hope and of better things.

In the first place, it is allowed on all hands that the Clergy are growing poorer; that the profession, so to call it, of the Ministry has fewer worldly advantages than in times past—stands relatively to other professions, as poor and undesirable. Good were it for the Church if on every parsonage in the land the words were written, "Endure hardness, as good soldiers of Christ." Our great danger, as it seems to me, has been that we were accounted a rich Church; that our Clergy have too often yielded to the temptation of holding their part with the wealthy gentlemanly world, taking gain "in exchange for godliness," entering into the frivolous and costly amusements of the day, and neglecting that flock over which the Holy Ghost had "made them overseers." But if mammon indeed departs, there is good hope that God may be served.

Next, it is indeed a good sign in the Church that the sight of holy poverty is revived among us; that we too, like the other branches of the Church of Christ, have some at least among us who are aiming at perfection. Truly *all* are not called to this, but it is surely a mark of Christ's goodness and love that some among us are. It is something, in the midst of riches, to have those who are *choosing* poverty; in the midst of this seething cauldron of luxury and selfishness, to have those who, like the Apostles of Christ, can say to the poor and

wretched, the impotent and helpless, the bowed down sinner and the innocent tender child, "Silver and gold have I none; but what I have, give I unto thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."

Such is the Church in her conflict with the money-getting age. Thus does she give her word of command, and thus do her bravest lead the van. My brethren, let us each in our degree and according as God has called us, cast in our lot with Christ and with His holy ones. Let us, if we cannot imitate, at least admire and love. Who knows whether God may not in His goodness give to us too a heart like theirs, to overcome the world? Or, if we *have* riches, let us realize that they are a very solemn trust. God forbid that we should call them of themselves evil. They are God's gift. "The Lord maketh rich." Abraham, Boaz, Zacchæus, all were rich. Like all other of God's creatures, they have a meaning and a use. Realize this use. Employ them to God's glory; spend them freely, lavishly if you will, for Christ and for His work, and by means of them, out of them, you "make to yourselves friends; who, when ye fail, shall receive you into everlasting habitations." On the other hand, use them wrongly, trust in them, take pride in them, look upon them as your own property, hoard them up, make them instruments of self-indulgence, luxury, vanity, and through them the soul is lost. "If ye be not faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your charge the true riches?"

May God, my brethren, open our eyes to see what are the true riches! Let the world, if it will, gather up, accumulate, hoard, become year by year ever richer, more laden with magnificence, more scornful in its abundance. There is one simple question which vitiates and blights the whole, even this: "What shall it profit?"

Yea, what shall it profit you or me, if we gain the whole world and lose our souls: and "what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" "Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Look for the last time on that goodly, splendid world, give one final glance at its wondrous wealth, its costly array, its "glory," and then carry on the eye a little further, even to the last scene of all. Hear that long bitter wail: "Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! For in one hour so great riches have come to nought." Ah, my brethren, who in that day will not rejoice to be found in the poverty of the saints of God, and "unspotted from the world!"

SERMON XIII.

The Conflict:—in a Restless Age.

1 KINGS xix. 12.

"And after the fire a still small voice."

THE Prophets of Israel were sent to be at once the representatives of the mind of God, and the channels of His revealed will to His people. It was, therefore, manifestly necessary that they should themselves be of one mind with God; that there should be a harmony between Himself, and the instruments of His manifestations. Elijah, to an eventful incident in whose history the text relates, is distinguished as the most prominent among the first fathers of the sacred line of prophets. It was therefore a matter of special moment, that he should not fail to preserve the leading features of the character, which was intended to mark them among men. The character of God was involved in it, as well as the purpose of their mission. God was, if we may so speak, committed, and His designs for the world became dependent on the faithfulness of His prophets. It was not merely the message they were commissioned to deliver, or the truth they were sent to reveal, but the character of the man, the mind he cherished in himself, was a matter of deep moment also. As God was invisibly behind the scene of the manifestation, even so the prophet was put forth visibly, that by voice, and action, and living witness, he might be the seal and pledge of its truth to the world.

We may, therefore, expect to find in the secret communications which took place between God and His prophets, Divine interpositions to impress upon them characteristic features of His own nature, on which the due exercise of their ministry depended; and as Elijah, from his prominent position in those early ages, was to give the tone, the key-note of inspiration to the after-strains of the prolonged prophetic utterances, a very special weight must be ascribed to the revelations vouchsafed to him; and to this particular revelation more specially, as it occurred at a period of peculiar danger and disturbance in the history of Israel, the time of the violent persecution of Ahab and Jezebel, and on a spot so mysteriously consecrated as Mount Horeb, the site of the ratification of the Mosaic Covenant. Nor can it be that this revelation was for Elijah alone, or limited in its application to the one special occasion which called him to this spot. The solemnity of the manifestation, as another voice from the sacred Mountain of the Covenant, must imply that it spoke with a universality of application, like to the moral law itself, a principle for all time and for the world.

Taking, therefore, into view these broad facts of the case, it is surely a most striking circumstance, that the impression to be made on the Prophet's soul, before God could speak to him as to his conduct and his mission, was that of stillness and rest. This truth was taught by a striking contrast drawn from the phenomena of the natural world, in which the Prophet must first learn where God is not to be found. He must first realize where it was hopeless to seek after God, and then where his soul and God could meet and commune together. For this purpose he was to go forth, and stand upon the Mount before the Lord. And,

"Behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire." Then followed the announcement of the momentous truth, by which the coming of the voice of God was to be known, the condition on which it depended, the only sphere of His manifestation. "And after the fire, *a still small voice.*" In the stillness then breathing around, and hushing into profound rest the Prophet's soul, the Divine message came and revealed itself. "And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave; and behold, there came a Voice unto him."

There follows the eventful truth, that stillness of heart is one essential condition for the revelations of the Divine Mind. It speaks in silence. It demands repose. To the agitated mind of Elijah, despairing of success, in fear of death, tossed with anxieties for Israel and for himself, the revelation came with special rebuke; but it also taught a most momentous lesson to all who seek to hear in the troubled scenes of this world's life the revelations of the Spirit of God. It gives us a view which extends far beyond the immediate occasion, opening into the unchangeable mind of God, revealing a law, a principle always the same, a necessary condition of communion between God and the soul.

Trace some of the leading revelations which speak of the entrance in of the Uncreated into the created, of the Divine into the human, and see how this same law uniformly obtains. Consider the opening scene of the creation: "The earth was without form and void, and

darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light[a]." What is there more still or silent in its irresistible influence than light; and yet it was the first movement of life out of chaos? This silent entrance of material life into these visible worlds, was but a symbol of the entrance and gradual progress of the spiritual creation, as the revelations of grace were communicated to the primeval races to whom the promises were given. The revelation of the Law at Mount Sinai was manifestly an exception to the general law. It was intended to strike terror. "The law was given because of transgressions[b]." It was a vision of judgment to open the way for the Gospel, as the wind, the earthquake and the fire preceded the "still small voice." Therefore thunder and lightnings, and the voice of the "trumpet exceeding loud," harmonized with its purpose. The Gospel was to be ushered in after it, and all the symbols which in the old time spoke of God communicating Himself in the intended Gospel life, are specially marked by stillness. Thus, e. g., in Hosea, "Behold, I will allure her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably to her[c]." The Spirit was to speak in the silence of solitude. Again, "I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon[d]." What is there more noiseless than the falling and action of the dew? What more silent than the growth of the flower, or the spreading of the branches of the tree?

But to take a wider view. The Sabbath, with its weekly and annual institutions, was the most pervading element of the whole Mosaic system, the most marked sign of the life of the covenant. Its enactments, so

[a] Gen. i. 2—4. [b] Gal. iii. 19. [c] Hos. ii. 14. [d] Ibid. xiv. 5.

stringent, so minute, though external, were evidently intended to introduce, and preserve amidst the restlessness and troubled toils of natural life, an idea, a consciousness, of the peace of heaven, of the quiet sphere in which God rests, and which would be the close of all this changeful scene, when the Communion of the elect shall finally repose in Him. It was intended to bring the heavenly life into the earthly, the peace of God into man's care-worn state. To lose it, or make light of it, or let any earthly craving overrule it,—that man, or even the land of his habitation, or beast, should forget its Sabbaths, was, according to the law of the Old Covenant, to have fallen from God. To let the Sabbath be lost, and the burden of the world's life break in upon it, was at once, as an inevitable consequence, to be lost to the blessings of the covenanted life. It was to lose the rest which in its continual recurrence was to be the counteraction of the troubled state of nature. There was a loss of heaven in the loss of rest.

These are indeed but types, yet they were manifestly instinct with the inner truth which will live when all dispensations are resolved back into God, and foreshadowed great mysteries amidst which we live.

Consider moreover what has ever marked, and still marks, the actual Divine Presence among men. There have been three distinct stages, speaking generally, of this Mystery of mysteries.

I. There was a Presence before the Incarnation, without any contact of a common nature. What a patient, long-suffering witness did the Eternal Presence manifest towards the wayward, fretful turbulence of those first 4,000 years of man's history. God was continually passing before the eyes of men, and proclaiming Himself, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious,

longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty[e]." And the response that arose from faithful hearts was ever the same patient waiting, which characterized Jacob, the very type of the chosen race: "I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord[f]." They rested on promises which were to be realized in the fulness of time. "Be still, and know that I am God[g]." "Your strength is to sit still[h]." "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength[i]."

Such is the burden of all early dispensations, even as the name of Noah, the type of the prophets of righteousness, meant "rest." And the effect wrought into the souls of the faithful was ever the same, the uniform witness to their unchanging truth. "And My people shall dwell in peaceable habitations, and in quiet resting-places, and the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever[k]." Such was the promise, and actual experience corresponded with it. The assurance of the Psalmist is the testimony to the realization of the promise: "He shall feed me in a green pasture, and lead me forth beside the still waters of comfort[l]."

II. The second stage of the Divine Presence was when God came, not indeed nearer, for nearer He could not be, but when He came within the folds of a common nature, becoming more truly and really one with us. How strikingly is the Incarnation throughout all its progress marked by this stillness! The Conception and the Nativity, the most momentous events in the world's history, occurred in the turbulent reign of Herod, yet

[e] Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. [f] Gen. xlix. 18. [g] Ps. xlvi. 10.
[h] Isa. xxx. 7. [i] Ibid. 15. [k] Ibid. xxxii. 17. [l] Ps. xxiii. 2.

were the least noticeable facts of the time. And the same characteristic prevailed throughout Its history. All the great facts of the Incarnation were as the "still small voice," noiseless movements in troubled times. The flight into Egypt, the Baptism at the Jordan, the overcoming of Satan in the wilderness, the Transfiguration, the Resurrection, the Ascension,—what could be more intensely calm and still? The ministry and death of Jesus were indeed violently disturbed scenes; not, however, in their inner life, not in our Lord, but in the world's excitement around Him, in the convulsed swaying to and fro of unbridled passions, in the maddened impatience of reckless profanity and unbelief. He Himself was the One still, quiet Form, moving amidst the wild storms that beat madly against Him. "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth[m]." "He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets[n]." And what impression He was seeking to make all the while on the souls of those who believed in Him, and received Him as their life, His own words declare: "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you." "Let not your heart be troubled." "Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And again: "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls."

Were we to follow out this promise, in its complete application to our nature, it might be shewn to mean rest for the whole man,—rest to the aspiring intellect, for the promise is, "I will lead you into all truth;" rest to the fiery passions, for they are to be subdued

[m] Isa. liii. 7. [n] Isa. xlii. 2; Matt. xii. 19.

into obedience to Christ; rest to the unquenchable desires, because they are satisfied in finding God in Christ.

III. Again, in the third stage of the Divine Presence, that in which we live, the dispensation of the Spirit, the Pentecostal state, a condition of humanity raised into a higher sphere than ever before, lifted above nature, a state of being, possessed, in the truest sense of the term, by the pervading, quickening, indwelling Presence of God intimately become one with us,—a yet deeper stillness pervades the life. How still are the movements of the Spirit! Newly born we are, but as secretly as the first birth within the womb; endued ever afterwards with ever fresh illapses of the Spirit; but what sense, what observation can avail to discern them? They transcend all consciousness. Silently these mysterious influences await our faith; silently they enter into us, as we seek; silently they abide in us, inworking into us; silently they pervade, they leaven, they transform us, as our will yields; silently they diffuse themselves throughout our faculties, our tone, our conversation, accents, features. We are transfigured, and yet there is no voice, no motion, even as the Temple of Solomon was built, and there was heard no sound of axe or hammer. Or, if we resist, if we sin against the grace bestowed on us, how far more awful the silence becomes! Though present within us still, It has withdrawn into some hidden unknown depths, and there in profoundest stillness waits, watching, longsuffering, in mercy giving secret warnings, stirring deep convictions; and then, if all be in vain, at the last, when the day of grace is past, and the Divine Presence must depart, Its going away is the stillness of death, the silence of the tomb.

Once more, within this new dispensation of the Spirit

there is a specially sacred Presence of our Lord, the Centre around which all our ministrations revolve, the seal and pledge of His abiding communion with us,—His sacramental Presence in the Holy Eucharist. How silent, how still, how profoundly hushed is this Presence of our Lord! Where on earth is there more intense calm than around the altar of the blessed Sacrament; and the more still our spirit as we receive the precious gift, the more deeply is felt Its blessedness, Its consoling power, the absorbing fulness of that amazing, transcendent Mystery of love.

Let us consider now what has actually come to pass in the face of this unceasing design and working of God, in His desire to impress this spirit of a true life on mankind—the wildness, the restlessness, the frenzied passions and violence, that, in despite of the Spirit of grace, have prevailed ever since the Fall. Nor can there be a more amazing instance of Divine love, than the continuance of the abiding Presence of God in the very midst of all this turbulence of the creature. There have been ages in which more than ordinarily the spirit of change and unrest has pervaded the human mind. Our own age may perhaps be truly marked, as one of these eventful crises of unrest in the troubled history of mankind. It is not that such a time is necessarily worse, or more unfavourable to religious life, than periods of comparative calm. There may be worse evils in a more stagnant state. Quiet waters often only corrupt the more. The storm clears the air. The torrent may run in a brighter flow than the more sluggish stream. But a restless age assuredly has its own special dangers to the life of the soul, and to the faith. And we need for our own safety to note the dangers besetting our own time, however

profitless and difficult it may be to judge of the comparative advantages of the one or the other state, which has characterized different ages.

There are acting around us many concurring causes tending to produce unrestfulness of mind. The vast widening of the field of knowledge in every department, the innumerable fresh openings for enquiry, the enormous increase of instrumental powers, the unprecedented means of rapid communication between all corners of the earth, the mixing of the nations, the running to and fro upon the earth, the stupendous energies of material and social progress,—all tend to produce such a result. And together with all these conspiring causes of disturbance, there has arisen a universal questioning, an unscrupulous criticism, a going back to first principles, a distrust of all old institutions, a scepticism as to all experiences of the past, an unbridled spirit of controversy, a marked absence of reverence for age or authority, as if the foundations of the great deep of human thought were broken up, and the pillars and very ground of all revealed truth shaken. This disturbed condition has extended to all domains of the mind, science, politics, art, commerce, literature, social laws. I am far from saying that these mighty movements may not have been intended to arouse dormant energies to meet the encroachments of evil: I speak of them only as facts, as great phenomena, marking a crisis in the destinies of our race, necessarily fraught with eventful issues in our probation.

This disturbed condition of things has, as was unavoidable, spread into the regions of the faith of Christ, and swayed to and fro the hearts of men in the very central home of the peace of His Gospel. Scarcely ever has there been a time which has experienced a greater

upheaving of the foundations of faith, with so unsparing, reckless, daring a spirit of questioning, such doubts and fears as to all truth, such siftings of all settled institutions and principles, such uncertainty cast over the very essential elements of communion with God, such doubts between man and man as to what each believes. This reaction from the torpor of a former century may be a righteous judgment of God, and necessary, such as we are, to awaken us to a deeper, more earnest life—the alternative perhaps lying between a rest which is the sure forerunner of decay and lukewarmness, or unrest and struggle, out of which may spring a truer energy of life; but unquestionably restlessness is in itself alien to the life of God, and a discipline of grace is needed in every individual soul to stay its course in some haven where it may be calm, apart from the tossings of the troubled sea, where it may commune with God, and be at peace.

I would, in conclusion, suggest some principles on which the hope of peace depends, and offer some rules which may, by God's blessing, conduce towards maintaining and preserving it in the heart amidst our many causes of fear and disquiet.

I. One principle touches upon the grounds of our faith. It is ever the happiest lot when faith is undisturbed. Thus unquestionably it was intended to be, that the doctrines in which we had been trained in earliest years should grow with our growth, and develope with advancing years, remaining still the same in its principles. But such quietly progressive growth of an unquestioned faith is scarcely possible now. Comparatively few have escaped the misery of having the foundations of their inner life disturbed, and the necessity forced upon them of testing and resettling it, as

they could, through patient and humble discipline of thought. Far the greater number of those who have attained rest in our troubled times, have done so at the cost of painful searchings, and balancings of mind, as one anxious question after another has swept across their souls, and forced upon them enquiries involving the whole groundwork of their renewed nature.

The theories which, for the most part, tempt us away from the ancient faith, may be resolved into these two,—(1) that the Bible is to be interpreted by every man for himself according to his own illuminated reason; and (2) development, in the sense of adding new truths, or what are tantamount to new truths and articles of faith, to the Church's creed, under the idea of their being the Spirit's living voice within the Church, going beyond the original revelation contained in the Holy Scriptures, and the early records of the Catholic Church. Without touching upon other objections to these theories, it is manifest that they are both alike unrestful principles; the one, because it views the interpretation of the Word of God as a question dependent on every man's private interpretation, and thus rendering it always uncertain; the other, as making the deposit of the faith an ever-shifting and changing record, the body of truth of to-day different from the body of truth of yesterday, and the truth of to-morrow different from the truth of to-day. It would be impossible here to argue against these principles or views of the grounds of truth; but it may be surely affirmed that both stand in direct opposition to the principle which the English Church asserted at the Reformation, as the basis of her teaching, which, however decried and deemed to be antiquated, is the only sure and restful stay for the soul's faith, viz. that Holy Scripture is the body of revelation,

and the records of the undivided Church the interpreter of its meaning, and its extent. This principle is restful, because it is unchanging, the record of facts to which it appeals being always the same, and yet so large in compass, as to give indefinite expansion to meet the endless needs of souls in their ever onward advance.

II. This, however, is comparatively an external ground of rest. We need a far deeper stay of principle within the soul. The second ground of rest may be illustrated from the Gospel history. There is a manifest difference in the characters of St. Peter and St. John, in this particular quality of restfulness; the one, all energy of impulse, with passionate alternations of zeal or despondency, of boldness or fear; the other, though also marked by great strength and impetuosity of temper, yet rising above all his brethren in calm depth of thought, and a contemplative inner life, his rapt, far-seeing mind dwelling as in an atmosphere above the clouds, where all is profoundly still. It has been observed, that the cause of this difference as to the greater restfulness of the soul of St. John, in comparison with his brother Apostle, lay in this,—that he perceived more of the Godhead in Christ, that he loved, and watched, and cleaved to Him more through the inner apprehension of His Divinity, while St. Peter rather loved his Lord in His Manhood, with a human love.

The comparison illustrates one important ground of rest in the human soul. We may look at the faith of Christ with a party zeal, as in a human cause, or with the natural warmth of attachment to opinions and views, as to any other question of human interest, while lower aims and motives stimulate ardour, and give strength to resolutions, constraining us to take a side in the stirring questions of the day. But there can be no rest in this

view of truth. Religious feeling acted on by such influences must ever vary with the changes of human thought, and fickleness of convictions in one or another whom we may select as our champion or our guide; or the mere floating phases of excitement which ever tend to disturb, perhaps, it may be, unsettle, even the strongest minds. It is only as we rise above these earthly phases of truth, and soar higher, and see in the human expressions of the Church's creeds the hidden mystery and manifestation of the Invisible, of the Divine Presence and purpose, holding an inner communion with it, and in some measure at least grasp the hidden reality, and live in union with it, tasting its sweetness and power, that we enter into real rest. Quietness and confidence begin to be felt when we have pierced the outward symbols of words, and passed beyond the human ideas which clothe it, and can think, and feel, and live in the consciousness of its possession; when the rapt soul goes forward, borne upwards, penetrated, and filled with the perception which expands before it, as the vision grows in response to the longing desire for complete oneness with it; rising with St. John to the perception of the Divine, gazing with a growing insight such as uniformly marks his relations of his Lord, His actions, His discourses,—a depth of calmness which the other Gospels do not equally exhibit, and markedly distinguished from the variableness of St. Peter's mind, which varied as the human view brightened or darkened, sometimes rushing forward to peril his life needlessly, sometimes as needlessly despairing, even to the denial of his Lord.

III. There is yet a third principle of rest, which also depends on the inner life, and is perhaps the truest stay of all. There may be a keen interest in religious truth; there may be an insight into its hidden depths, a sense

of the Godhead manifest in all its outward forms; and yet there may not be a personal interest in its grace, an assurance of one's own personal safety, of God's favour and love towards oneself, of one's own acceptance in the Beloved. There is in the natural life a feeling about one's own home, which makes it always a thought of sweetest and fullest repose, to which the heart turns from the most distant wanderings, and in the midst of the greatest troubles, with a fondness and a confidence that causes one to feel, that there is always at least one bright and restful spot on earth in the darkest times. Such to a truly religious mind, living in the consciousness of forgiveness, acceptance, personal union with God, is the thought of one's own assured place in the Heart of God. There is a consciousness of peace which enters the heart, when it receives into itself a sense of God's fatherly love, and the fulness of the atonement, as its own precious possession, appropriates it, embraces it, loves God with a responding love, yields itself in the conviction of its secret joy, and gives itself to live for Him, as his own God and Father. And in such consciousness there is a feeling stirred, which gives an entirely new character to all religious knowledge, and in the midst of all disturbance of religious opinions constitutes a fixed point of rest, like to the home feeling, which preserves its magic power throughout the most troubled life. What are controversies, what the variations of human opinion, to one who has a personal trust in the pledged love of Christ, revealed to his soul as his eternal portion? What are religious dissensions, or the heat of ardent strife for victory in the collision of the disputants of the day, to one who has seen the eternal truth with almost unveiled countenance, and is living in a constant union with it, as his own haven of everlasting

peace, himself forgiven, accepted, loved, longed for, hastening home, with a heart already gone before, and enshrined in the secret tabernacle of the Most High, his God, his Father, his Friend. Controversy and discussion, as they arise, may then become the means of suggesting fresh earnest thoughts, and deepening convictions, and awakening enquiries into fresh fields of truth, to feed and increase the quickened soul; but it is possessed of a rest which such outward disturbance cannot touch. There is a power in this secret conviction of one's own acceptance in the love of God, which, "like as the dew of Hermon upon the hill of Sion," breathes a calm beyond the reach even of the movements of anxious thought, as there is in the ocean a stillness in the great body of waters within and below the troubled waves that toss themselves upon the surface above. Only "make your own calling and election sure" in this blessed conviction of the personal love of God towards your own soul, and your own earnest, fixed love to Him as the seal of a true Sonship to the eternal Father through the Spirit. You may then enter into controversy undisturbed, and meet even the last conflict, should it arise, as some imagine, in our day, between good and evil, between truth and falsehood, between Christ and Antichrist, without dismay, or loss.

IV. One other ground of peace may be suggested. We have dwelt on the value of earnest views of the inner life of faith, and on the personal sense of one's own acceptance with God, as deep abiding points of rest in troubled times. There is a theology which regards such impressions, views, feelings, as alone sufficient for rest, as everything in themselves, as involving all true and enduring peace—which disregards discipline, rule, forms of devotion, and special directions as to the soul's

guidance, as needless, perhaps hurtful to the freedom of the child of God. It regards the end as all, neglects the means. Such a view is right in estimating highly a true faith, and the soul's own appropriation of its personal bliss and rest in Christ; its error lies in trusting such feelings, and supposing that they constitute a permanent and unchangeable state of life in God. The soul is not safe, simply because it sees and feels the secret truth of the love of God, as its own sure ground of hope. Experience proves, as we learn the deeper struggles of the soul's history, that life, to be true, and sustained against the tendencies to decline and change which beset us all, needs a growing, developing, advancing progress; and this not only to keep its hold on God, and its own personal union with God, but also to strengthen and increase that hold. Now this depends on the constant discipline of self, ever actively employed in removing the faults that mar it, winning the soul to increasing efforts, as it nourishes within the Divine life, which, if left untended, inclines to grow feeble and decay. The truest rest is maintained in the healthful exercise of living powers, not in an indolent repose, or consciousness of past possession. It depends, not on the question, 'What has been already done in me?' or, 'What have I once experienced as the ground of my assurance?'—but on the question, 'Am I feeding still more and more the germ of life within me? Am I exercising more and more the powers of love which bind me to God, that my whole life may be conformed to it?'

Rest is in the buoyant, balanced play of great forces. In the movement of the heavenly orbs, in their spheres of light, all is intense action, while yet their very motion is the sublimest repose. Thus, too, the soul in its

onward movements, as it exerts its manifold powers of Divine life, its senses more and more exercised to discern between good and evil, more and more experienced to "refuse the evil, and choose the good," gradually, imperceptibly enters into the truest rest. Therefore it is that frequent meditation, earnest study of the Word of God, constant prayer, definite rules of life, growing habits of self-discipline, unwearied efforts of progressive increase in virtue, constant faithful Communion, by which our hold is maintained on God, and His hidden Presence grows in the partaker,—all such, and all like exercises are needful, for they perfect and advance the inner life, and in this continual increase of God abiding within, ever tend to deepen the soul's blessed consciousness of its assurance and safety in His love.

And yet withal the deepest, truest rest in this life can be but partial and imperfect. It is still but unrest, compared with the rest to come. It is an essential part of our discipline, that we should endure the inward trials of doubts, and fears, and questionings, cloudings of soul, and disturbances from without or from within, through troubled hearts and fitful tempers with which we may come in contact, through discussions which may arise around us, or through our own infirmities; and we have to cast ourselves again and again, as our only stay, in faith on the all-sustaining Arm of God, trusting till the storm be overpast, and the clear sky appear. There will come shadows of dark clouds over the soul, and sounds which disquiet and shake its firmness, as upon the Prophet's heart, when God spoke the mysteries of the future history of Israel; "And I heard, and understood not. Then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And He said, Go thy way, Daniel,

for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, and made white and tried, but the wicked shall do wickedly, and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand." The searching must come, but the promise is sure; "Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand, three hundred and five and thirty days." And the personal assurance of peace rises above all other thought in its fulness of anticipatory bliss. "But go thou thy way, till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days[o]."

[o] Dan. xii. 9, 10, 12, 13.

SERMON XIV.

The Conflict:—with the Spirit of Expediency.

ST. JOHN xviii. 14.

"Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people."

THIS advice of Caiaphas was given in the Jewish Sanhedrim, not long after our Lord had raised Lazarus from the dead. That mighty miracle had produced a deep impression, and many of the Jews were convinced by it, and professed faith in Christ Jesus. Accordingly the Chief Priests and Pharisees became alarmed, and immediately summoned a council to consider what was to be done. We know that at least two members of that body were favourable to Jesus; and it would appear from the sacred narrative that when the question was first raised, a generous spirit was manifested, and that they were almost inclined to let Him alone. But one thing was quite clear, that a dread of the Roman power was a paramount feeling in the assembly. "What do we?" they say, "for this Man doeth many miracles. If we let Him thus alone, all *men* will believe on Him; and the Romans shall come, and take away both our place and nation[a]." This reasoning is not quite obvious at first sight. But it is probable that they thought that the people might

[a] St. John xi. 47, 48.

"take Him by force, to make Him a King;" and that then the Romans, taking advantage of the general confusion, would complete their conquest, make themselves masters of Jerusalem, and put an end to the national existence of the people. It was at this crisis in the debate that Caiaphas interposed. His office gave weight to his words, and he was listened to with the deference due to his high position. But his tone was haughty and self-asserting. "Ye know nothing at all," he said, "nor consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." The Evangelist goes on to inform us that these words had a far deeper meaning than Caiaphas recked of. "This spake he not of himself; but being High Priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad[b]." He spake this not of himself. Divine wisdom so shaped his utterance, that it became a prophecy of the triumphs of the Crucified One. In himself Caiaphas was a mere bold and crafty time-server, who gave his advice in the sense of political expediency. But it pleased God to make him, as High Priest, the special though involuntary organ of the Holy Ghost. Once more the Urim and the Thummim glowed within him; and his advice, base and unjust though it was, as conceived by him, was lifted up by the constraining power of God into a glorious meaning which embraced the salvation of the world. For the moment he was a vessel of the truth; and he became, as other wicked men, but the instrument to accomplish that which God's hand, and God's providence, had determined before to be done.

[b] St. John xi. 49—53.

But it is not in this its wider meaning that I have to consider this subject this evening. Dismissing from our minds the prophetical character of Caiaphas' words, and stripping him of the accidents which belonged to him as High Priest, we see in him a remarkable instance of one who deliberately preferred the spirit of expediency to reason and justice; and we see also by the way in which Divine wisdom overruled his counsel, that a policy which is grounded, not on the dictates of conscience, but on the suggestions of worldly interest, is as useless as it is immoral. May God help us to apply the warning to ourselves. But it may assist us in doing this, if we first mark the character of Caiaphas a little more closely.

St. John informs us that he was High Priest "that year;" and this leads us to consider the precise position which he held in the Jewish succession. We all know that the High Priesthood was by Divine appointment in the family of Aaron, and that it was held for life. Nevertheless, about the time of the opening of our Lord's public ministry, we read of two High Priests, Annas and Caiaphas. The fact is that Annas was the legitimate High Priest, as the descendant of Aaron; but the Roman power had at this time so far encroached upon the spiritual liberties of the Jewish people, that their rightful High Priest had been deposed, and a succession of others appointed in his place at pleasure. But Annas still retained sufficient power to influence these elections; and at this time he had succeeded in procuring the appointment for his own son-in-law, Caiaphas. In fact, Caiaphas held the office for several years in succession; and in particular, he held it "that year,"—that remarkable year in which Jesus died and rose again, and the Holy Spirit was

given. The Jews, however, still regarded Annas as the true High Priest, lineally descended from Aaron, although the temporal power compelled them likewise to recognise in some sort the authority of Caiaphas. But Annas is the leading character. Caiaphas, bold and unscrupulous as he was, was a mere tool in his hands. Nevertheless as the High Priest *de facto*, his position was one of great importance; and holding it as he did "that same year," that eventful year, he had the fearful responsibility of examining the claims of Jesus of Nazareth to be the Messiah, and of either accepting or rejecting those claims. But the intrigues by which he obtained the office were a bad preparation for a just and righteous exercise of it.

We know not certainly to what religious sect he belonged. But at all events his family were Sadducees, and his friends were of that philosophical but sceptical school[c]. But still he was the acting High Priest during the whole period of our Lord's public ministry. Divine providence had raised him at that particular crisis to this awful dignity, which brought him in the closest relations with God, and made him the very centre and focus of the Divine manifestations. We know, too, that the gifts necessary for the due administration of such a trust could not have been wanting to him. How then ought he, above others, to have longed for the expected Messiah! What faith and hope ought to have animated his heart as he daily handled the sacred symbols of the temple! Day by day he saw the priests approach the altar with their sacrifices; and once in every year he himself, the living type of the great High Priest, passed alone into that mysterious recess the Holy of Holies, with the blood of atonement. Was it possible that

[c] See Acts iv.

he could do this without one believing thought of the Messiah[d]? Alas! he did but act a part. He was a mere man of the world, a very hireling at God's altar, clothed indeed with the outward vestments of the priesthood, but in the sight of Him who reads the heart, a painted hypocrite, a "whited wall."

Such is the man who appears before us with these counsels of wickedness; and he is surely an awful warning as to the lengths to which considerations of mere expediency will carry a man. Even the heathen condemned the notion that a thing which is dishonest or unjust could ever be profitable. Yet Caiaphas scrupled not to condemn an innocent man. He had not a word of accusation to bring against our Lord; only it was politically expedient to put Him to death. He would not first examine the claims of Jesus, and finding them just, commit all consequences to God. He little thought of God. To him the Romans were close at hand; and God was far away. A future judgment had no power over him; perhaps he had already blotted it out of his creed. And then it is no wonder that the world to come was nothing to him, and the world present everything. Such a man made little of sacrificing truth and justice, and screening an act of abominable cruelty under a cloak of worldly wisdom and political necessity.

It is scarcely necessary to pursue his conduct any further. Having thus deliberately preferred expediency to justice, he was of course prepared for the last and fatal act of all. But it was an awful moment for him when Jesus was brought before him by the band and officers, bound as a criminal. The conscience of this man of worldly sagacity must have spoken loudly within him when he put that meek and suffering Being on His

[d] See Tholuck's "Light from the Cross."

oath. But expediency was to him more than conscience. It was from no desire of the truth, it was rather from a resolute blindness to it, that he put the question "Art thou the Christ, the Son of God?" And no sooner had he drawn forth the desired answer, than with an affected horror, but with real inward satisfaction, he rent his clothes, and cried, "He hath spoken blasphemy[e]."

Nor was it otherwise on the two other occasions on which he is presented to our notice. The same man who shut his eyes to the miracle of the raising of Lazarus, now rejects the crowning evidence of our Lord's own resurrection, and descends to the miserable subterfuge of bribing the soldiers to circulate a falsehood to explain the fact of the empty sepulchre[f]. And once again, when Peter and John are brought before the council, and questioned as to the power and authority by which they had healed the lame man at the Beautiful gate of the Temple, once more is the truth solemnly proclaimed to Caiaphas; but once more it is resisted, and the last we read of him is that he joined the council in commanding the Apostles with many threatenings, not to speak at all, nor to teach in the name of Jesus[g]. Truly the spirit of expediency had done its work upon this unhappy man. It had closed his heart and mind against the evidence of the miracles of the Son of God. It had enabled him to resist all the moral power of Christ's spotless example in life; and all the supernatural evidences that gathered round Him in His death. It had blinded him to the testimony of the earthquake, the broken seals, and the rifled tomb. And now, when "He that was dead now lives again," and His Spirit animates His followers, so that many signs and wonders are done by them in His

[e] St. Matt. xxvi. 65. [f] Ibid. xxviii. 11. [g] Acts iv. 18.

name, still is Caiaphas unmoved. And so he passes out of our sight, a character hateful to God and His saints,—one who, under the plea of expediency, resisted the truth which he was specially commissioned to defend, and betrayed his high trust, and crucified the Lord of Glory, and endeavoured to the end with impotent malice to crush that Gospel in which are centred the highest aspirations and noblest destinies of man.

And now, in applying this example for our own instruction and warning, let it not be urged that I have taken an extreme case, far beyond the limits within which the evil spirit of expediency usually manifests itself. An extreme case is often of great value to shew what a false principle is, and to what it may tend.

But what is expediency? Is it always a false principle? Is it always wrong to choose what is expedient? In these questions there is involved another, namely this, What is the end which we are proposing to ourselves? what is our great object in life? The original words, both in the Greek and in the Latin [h], (the one signifying that which contributes something, brings in some help towards the attainment of the desired end; and the other, that which speeds onwards or expedites a matter), both shew that expediency has a special reference to the end at which we are aiming. To have a definite aim in life, that is the first point. Without this my whole conduct will be marked by feebleness and inconsistency. Given an object in life—granted that I have full faith in the desirableness of that object, and am resolved to attain it; and then it must be evident that my wisdom will consist in guarding as much as possible against deviation, in avoiding everything which may hinder me in my endeavours after it, and in

[h] *συμφέρει, expedit.*

making all my purposes and actions bear either directly or indirectly upon its acquisition.

And now, Christian brethren, what is our aim? What is the object which we, as redeemed and regenerate men, profess to have in view? Is it not the securing of our happiness, not merely through the life of time, but onwards and still onwards, through the ages evermore? The most momentous question that we can put to ourselves as immortal beings (for we dismiss as no less irrational than unscriptural the notion of the soul once endued with life ever ceasing to exist)—the most momentous question is surely this, Shall this soul, this immortal soul, miss the great object of its being, and become fixed in evil, and be finally banished from God? Or shall it advance to the full measure of its capacities, live in the light of its Creator here, and dwell everlastingly in His presence hereafter? Well; that is the question. And to this question there can be but one answer. We all desire salvation, we all profess to seek it. And if we may be allowed to urge the greatness of the object, then it must be allowed that to waver or be undecided in such a work is to convict ourselves at once of folly and infatuation. That, and that alone, is expedient which helps us onwards towards this great object: that, and that alone, is inexpedient which hinders us in the prosecution of it.

But here comes our great difficulty, that in this our present state of being we have to do with two worlds—the world present, which appeals to our sense, and the world to come, which addresses itself to our faith. Although the end which we propose to ourselves is heaven, we cannot altogether detach ourselves from earthly things. We cannot liberate ourselves from earthly business, or care, or study, or recreation, as the

man of this world can liberate himself from God and from eternity. We cannot care only for the things of heaven as if we had nothing to do with earth, as the man of this world can care only for earth as if he had nothing to do with heaven. And he who knows anything of real practical Christianity must be well aware how great is the difficulty of using this present world so as not to abuse it, of being *in* it and yet not *of* it, and of following the occupations of earth with the dispositions of heaven. It is but a divided attention that the best of us can give to the things of eternity; and too often, almost in spite of ourselves, we indulge in practices which interfere too plainly with that one object which by our profession we maintain to be the only one really worth striving after.

Do not let me misrepresent the case. Do not understand me as though I meant that it is unlawful for us to seek worldly advantages. Being appointed by God to live for a time in this world, we may, nay, we must use it. We may, within proper limits, seek its honours and advantages; but we must seek them in moderation; and we must seek them not as an end, but as a means; not as an end in which we may terminate our desires, but as a means whereby God may be glorified and Christ's kingdom extended. It is lawful for us to possess wealth; and we may use it for God. We may bring it as an offering to His altar, that so, being employed for Him, it may help forward our own salvation and that of others. But if we "set our hearts" upon it, it will make us proud, or narrow-minded, or self-indulgent. Or we may obtain worldly distinction in lawful and honourable contest, and we may lay this talent at the foot of the Cross; we may consecrate our abilities and our influence to God, and so of His mercy shine hereafter

as brighter stars in the firmament of His glory. But if we use these talents for the advancement of some worldly ends; then will that which should have been for our welfare become to us an occasion of falling. Instead of making us happy, it will sooner or later bring about our degradation. It is sad to see how minds once gifted, and noble, and generous, have become feeble and dwarfish and contracted; gradually losing their power and intensity, by terminating their desires in temporal things.

It is here then that we, as Christians, stand face to face with that spirit of expediency which puts the world present in the place of the world future, and man in the place of God. Nor is it only the conflict of *our* time: it is the conflict of *all* time. All along, through the whole history of man, from the first sin (which was a sin of expediency), down to the present moment, the strife has been going on. And all along God has been teaching men by many and frequent examples, that the true expediency is that which keeps the next world stedfastly in view, and which is directed by duty and by justice rather than by present interest or worldly advantage. Worldly expediency, for example, could have suggested many motives to Joseph for yielding to the importunities of the wife of Potiphar. But faith enabled him to soar above that fleshly temptation; and God brought him through suffering to great honour, and comforted him on every side. Worldly expediency would have prompted Moses to accept the advantages of Pharaoh's court; but faith in the future enabled him to choose rather to suffer affliction for a time with the people of God; and God exalted him to be greater than the greatest of the Egyptian kings. But why should I multiply instances? All history points to the same

great truth, that though worldly expediency may bring present advantage, yet in the end it will miserably disappoint; and that, on the other hand, he who foregoes a present advantage at the high demand of conscience and duty, will in the end find happiness and honour.

But it is a conflict, my brethren; and it is a conflict for which we must ever be prepared. For the spirit of worldly expediency continually besets us. It is about our path and about our bed; it meets us at every turn; it is to be found in the ordinary converse and associations of men, in every class, in all conditions of life. It manifests itself in the tortuous policy of the ambitious, and in the greedy aims of the covetous. We see it, wherever politicians have used the Church as a mere stepping-stone to power, or wherever the Church has sought by unworthy compromises the favour of the State. We see it in him who, to gratify his selfishness or his vanity, indulges in expenses which are beyond his means; or, again, in him who, when thrown into the company of the vicious or the sceptical, though secretly condemning them, shrinks from speaking out for fear of sacrificing his popularity. Go into the market-place, or into the haunts of business, and you will find it in the temptation to employ the scant measure or the false balance, or to use a trick that will pass unnoticed. The good man has to encounter it in the suggestion to seek the accomplishment of a worthy end by unworthy means, or to overlook a little evil in reaching forward towards a great good. All have to confront it in the temptation to relax a little here, and to accommodate a little there, and to swerve in the least degree from the line of truth and integrity. We see the evil in its full development in a Caiaphas; but we see precisely the

same spirit in the endeavour to keep in with both worlds, and in the surrender in matters, apparently trivial, but really momentous, of reason to appetite, religion to interest, and God to Mammon.

The remedy for this evil is two-fold. It is, first, to remember that this world, with all its advantages, is passing away. It is but a thing of time, a mere accident of man's real being, exercising of course for a while its influence over him, but having no abiding relation to him. "When he dieth he shall carry nothing away." "Though, while he lived, he blessed his soul: and *men* will praise thee when thou doest well to thyself[1]." Yes, the man of worldly expediency, and sagacity will have his admirers; they will applaud his present success; but death strips him of all. And, my brethren, if any of you have ever been touched with the fear of death, you will remember what thoughts and designs then possessed you, and of how small account it then seemed to you to have stood well with the world, and to have forgotten God. And those thoughts will come to you again some day. Suppose that this night the trumpet were to sound, and the great white throne to appear, would not all that I have said appear to be a tremendous reality? Live, then, as though that trumpet were ever sounding in your ears. Live in the remembrance that your connection with this world will soon be ended, and this will help you to trample the spirit of expediency under foot.

Then lift up your eyes to that other world, the kingdom that cannot be moved; and behold by faith Him whom Caiaphas rejected. There He is, the perfect God and perfect Man, who, "when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the

[1] Psalm xlix. 17, 18.

Majesty on high[k]." There He is, who "is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them[l]." There He is who has overcome the world, that you in Him may overcome it too. Is there one in this church to-night who, with a lingering desire to be a true Christian, is yet held back by some worldly entanglement? Seek, I pray you, the help of the Spirit of God, that you may break from it at once. You know we admire the far-seeing man—the man who can look a little a-head of his time. This is simply what you have to do. We ask you to "quit you like men." We ask you to forecast for eternity. This is the true expediency, to make every thought, every desire, every action tend towards Heaven. Make this resolution, and you are not far from the kingdom of God. Oh, may no power of Satan, no love of this present world, no suggestion of a deceitful heart, prevent you from entering in! That kingdom, begun in grace here, shall end in glory there, in those joys which can never be taken from you, for they are the eternal inheritance of the just.

[k] Heb. i. 3. [l] Ibid. vii. 25.

SERMON XV.

The End of the Conflict.

REVELATION vi. 2.

"I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer."

ONE of the most important principles for the right interpretation of the Apocalypse, or Book of Revelation, is this, that—like the Book of the prophet Daniel—it is not to be regarded as a regular succession of consecutive prophecies, but that it consists of many repetitions and recapitulations, exhibiting the same or contemporaneous events under different phases. Thus, for example, the vision of the SEVEN SEALS, which is unfolded in the sixth and seventh chapters of the Apocalypse, contains a prophecy extending from the first Advent of Christ to the second Advent.

This correct exposition of that vision has been unhappily overlooked by many modern interpreters; but it was the universally received exposition of the ancient Church, and it has been adopted in our own Authorized Version, where, in the heading of the chapter, this vision is rightly said to contain a prophecy "to the end of the world."

Let me now invite your attention to a contemplation of this vision. Let us consider how its predictions have been already fulfilled; and let us then reflect what it

reveals concerning the consummation of all things, and what encouragements it affords us to encounter the conflicts of these latter days with faith, courage, and joy.

This vision is divided into seven portions, each separated from the other by the opening of a seal. A roll is revealed having seven seals. This roll contains a prophetic history of the Church from the Incarnation of Christ to the Day of doom. This roll is in the hand of Christ, and He alone, it is said, can open it; for in Christ's hands are all the fortunes of the Church, and He alone can disclose them. Hear now what the writer of the Apocalypse, the beloved disciple, says: "And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and behold a white horse; and He that sat on him had a bow; and He went forth conquering, and to conquer."

Behold here a revelation of the glory of Christ. He is the Rider on the white horse. *White*[a], the colour of *light*, is Christ's colour in the Apocalypse. He rides upon a horse, for He is a mighty conqueror; He has a bow in His hand, for he discharges arrows against His adversaries. The Psalmist teaches us this exposition in his vision of Christ in the 45th Psalm. There he says, addressing Christ, "Gird Thee with Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O Thou most mighty, according to Thy worship and renown. Good luck have Thou with Thine honour. Ride on because of the word of truth, of meekness and righteousness, and Thy right hand shall teach Thee terrible things. Thy *arrows* are very sharp, and the people shall be subdued unto Thee, even in the midst among the King's enemies[b]," or rather, '*In the heart of* the King's enemies.'

What, brethren, are the *arrows* of Christ? Let the Prophet Zechariah reply. By him Christ says, "I have

[a] λευκός, and *lux*.

[b] Ps. xlv. 4.

bent Judah for Me, and filled the *bow* with Ephraim, and raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece; and the Lord shall be seen over them, and His *arrow* shall go forth as the lightning [c]."

What does this mean? It means that Judah was Christ's bow and Ephraim His arrows, and that He would discharge them against Greece, that is, against the Gentile world. Christ bent Judah as a bow, and filled it with Ephraim as with arrows, when He sent forth those sons of Sion, His Apostles and Evangelists, to vanquish Heathendom and convert it to Christ. St. Paul was Christ's arrow, St. Peter was His arrow, St. Matthew was His arrow, and St. John was His arrow. He placed them on the string of His bow, and shot them forth as spiritual shafts and bolts, feathered and wafted on with wings from the golden pinions and silver plumage of the Divine Dove, and made them invincible, not for the *death* but for the *life* of His enemies, wounded with the love of Christ.

What follows? Turn to the vision of the Apocalypse —"a crown was given Him," a garland of victory [d], and He went forth conquering and to conquer.

Therefore, brethren, we may be sure, that whatever enemies may rise up against Christ, they will one day fall prostrate before Him. Whatever foes may assault His Church, they will one day be trampled under the feet of Him who rides upon the white horse, and goes forth conquering and to conquer.

But now a different scene is opened to the view. The Second Seal is opened. Another rider appears—another horse. But how diverse from the first! This rider

[c] Zech. ix. 13, 14.

[d] *στέφανος*: the crown of victory; He has also many *diadems* (xix. 12), that is, Christ is the everlasting *Conqueror*, as well as the universal *King*.

wields a great sword; his horse is not white, no, but red; red as *fire*[e]; and power "is given him to take peace from the earth, and that men should kill one another."

Who is this rider?

It is no other than the evil one, Satan, the adversary of Christ and of His Church; and here we see revealed the *first* form of hostility which Satan displayed against the Holy One of God and His Church.

That was the form of *persecution*. The sword which he bears in the vision is the imperial sword of Rome: the horse of fire, on which he rides, represents the fury with which he raged against the Church in the second and third centuries after Christ. The meaning of this vision had been already disclosed in part, in the days of the seer of the Apocalypse, St. John.

The Roman Cæsars had unsheathed the sword against Christ and His Church; they had mounted the horse of fire; the Christians of Rome had illumined the streets of the capital of the world in the dark night, with the glare of the fires of martyrdom which consumed them.

St. John himself had passed through the fire, like the children at Babylon; and he was now a prisoner at Patmos for the faith[f]. The vision was to receive a clearer and fuller interpretation from the days that were to come. The rider on the horse of fire would be permitted to try the faith of the saints for many years; he would ride on, in his furious career, with the imperial sword of persecution brandished in the air for two centuries. But what then? Would he be able to overcome the Holy One of God? Would the rider on the red horse of fire be able to overthrow the

[e] πυρρός. [f] Rev. i. 9.

Rider on the white horse of light? No, no; the voice of Prophecy had declared that the Rider on the white horse should "go forth conquering, and to conquer."

And so it was; the assaults of the enemy made Christ's conquests more glorious. The fire and sword of persecution displayed the truth and power of the Gospel; the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church.

After more than two hundred years of futile attempts to destroy the Church by persecution, Satan learnt this lesson. What, therefore, did he do? This is revealed at the opening of the next seal.

"I beheld," says St. John, "and lo, a black horse; and he that sat upon him had a balance in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine."

What do we see here? The enemy of Christ and the Church has dismounted from the horse of fire, and now rides forth on a black horse. But though his outward aspect is altered, his inner mind is the same. The horse is of a different hue, but whether it be red as fire, or black as night, it is equally opposed to the Rider on the horse of light. The enemy has, it is true, laid aside the sword of persecution, for he found it to be of none avail against Christ and the Church; and he now bears in his hand a balance, the emblem of justice. But this is merely a fair semblance, a specious profession of equity; it is, as the Prophet Hosea [g] calls it, a "balance of deceit."

What, brethren, did this vision mean? Let history say. When Satan had discovered that he could not

[g] Hosea xii. 7.

unhorse Christ, and could not hurt the Church by persecution; but that persecution elicited the graces, and exercised the virtues, of saints and martyrs, and manifested the power of Christ, and imparted new glory to the Church, and gave new triumphs to the Gospel; he resorted to another device, less cruel in appearance, but more deadly in effect. He laid aside the sword of Persecution, and he took in his hands the balance of Heresy. He dismounted from the horse of fire, and rode forth on the black horse—the horse of night and of death.

He took in his hand the balance of heresy; the specious balance of heresy, the semblance of equity and reason, a shew of fairness and justice, but a deadly work of destruction. What was that? Need I remind you, brethren, what was the character of all the heresiarchs of old? They came forth with bland speeches, and honeyed words, and sweet smiles of friendly greeting, and spoke much of charity, with soft silver tongues, and in calm and measured accents.

Such was Arius, such was Nestorius, such was Macedonius, such was Pelagius; all of them fair-spoken men, with calm features and gentle utterances.

But *there* was the enemy, *there* was the rider on the black horse with the balance in his hands. They would not receive the supernatural mysteries of Revelation, as revealed by the Spirit in Holy Scripture, and as received by the Church of God from the beginning; but with philosophic calmness they handled these mysteries as if they were geometrical problems, or dialectic syllogisms; they weighed them in the *balance* of human Reason, they handled and poised those mysteries—such as the mystery of the two natures of Christ in one Person, the mystery of the ever-blessed Trinity, the

mystery of grace and free will, the mystery of the sacrifice of the Cross—as if they were so many palpable, ponderable articles of marketable traffic, like spicery, which might be measured by ounces and grains and scruples, in the scales of their own intellects.

Would to God, brethren, that this presumptuous spirit did not still prevail among us!

But what says the Divine voice? It exposes the real character of the rider on the black horse. "A measure of wheat for a penny" (or denarius), "and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine." That is, though the enemy may profess fairness and equity, he brings a famine in his train; a scarcity of sound doctrine, a dearth of the bread of life, a famine of the soul. And the Voice utters a warning—that the desire of the adversary's heart, and the tendency of his work, is to "hurt the oil and wine;" that is, to injure the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which are blighted and withered by the heresies of rationalism; and so the soul of man perishes, under the baneful influences of him who rides on the black horse with the balance in his hand.

The next vision presents a still more gloomy picture. The fourth seal is opened. "I beheld, and lo a *pale* horse"—or rather a *livid* horse, a *ghastly* horse,—"and the name of him who sat on him was Death, and the Grave followed at his side: and power was given him to slay with the sword over a fourth part of the earth, with famine and with death, and the beasts of the earth."

What did this vision mean? The history of the Church has explained it. The enemy riding on the *black* horse had prepared the way for worse ravages, which he would be permitted to make, when riding on the pale or ghastly horse. The heresies in Christendom

were followed, as by a natural consequence, by the havoc which was made by the falchion of the false prophet of Arabia, and by the Saracenic armies, which swept over Asia, Africa, and Europe; and they were followed also, as by a natural consequence, by the cruelties of Papal Antichristianism, which are displayed more fully in still more vivid colours in other parts of the Apocalypse, as perpetrated by those powers which are here called by a name that aptly describes them,—the name of savage predatory animals thirsting for carnal dominion,—the "Beasts of the earth."

Here, then, brethren, in this rapid prophetic sketch of the fortunes of the Church, we are brought near to our own times. And lest we should imagine that Christ has forgotten His Church, and that He who went forth "conquering and to conquer" in the first age of the Gospel, has been checked in His course by the adversary who rode forth against Him, first on the fiery horse of persecution, secondly on the black horse of heresy, and thirdly on the ghastly horse of Roman Antichristianism, we are permitted to see a vision of the spirits of the departed who had suffered for Christ since His first Advent.

The fifth seal is opened. "I beheld," says the beloved Seer, "under the altar the souls," that is, the disembodied spirits, "of the martyrs who had been slain" in the preceding ages, "for the word of God, and for the testimony of the truth which they had held fast." St. John was permitted to see, in that mysterious vision, the souls of those who willingly and joyfully shed their blood like victims offered up on God's altar. He saw the souls of his brother Apostles, who had already poured out their life-blood for Christ; he saw, in a prophetic ecstasy, the souls of those who would come

after him, and seal their testimony with their blood. He saw, it may be, the souls of his own dear disciples, Ignatius and Polycarp; he saw, it may be, the souls of the martyrs of the Colosseum, and of the martyrs of Carthage, and of the martyrs of Vienne and Lyons; he saw, it may be, the martyrs of Britain in the days of Diocletian; he saw, it may be, the martyrs of Christendom who gladly gave their lives to arrest the progress of Islamism; he saw, it may be, the souls of the martyrs of Bohemia, of Germany, of France, and of England, who gladly gave their bodies to be burnt, in order that they might maintain the faith, once delivered to the saints, against the corruptions, errors, novelties, and usurpations of Papal Rome.

He heard also the voice of the souls of those martyrs, praying for the Second Coming of Christ: "How long, O Lord, Holy and True, dost Thou not come to judge?" Their prayer was not unheard: a white robe, a robe of spotless purity, the robe of Christ's holiness, was given to each of them; and they were told that the time would not be long. Others, their brethren and fellow-servants, must fight the good fight for Christ, as they themselves had done; others must suffer for Christ, as they themselves had suffered; and then the glorious muster-roll of the noble Army of Martyrs would be complete; then Christ would come in glory to awaken their bodies from the dust, and to re-unite them to their souls, and to receive them for ever to Himself.

After these words of comfort, *the sixth* seal is opened: it reveals the conflicts of the Church in the latter days, the eve of the end. It reveals the struggles of our own days. Brethren, let no man dream of earthly calm and comfort in the days which now are, and which are

coming upon us. There yet remains a battle, a severe battle to be fought, one which will try your faith, and prove the courage of every soldier of Christ. Hear the words of the vision: "There was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell to the earth, even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places, and the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman and every free man hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand [h]?"

What does this vision portend? It warns us, that the latter days will not be days of quietness and peace, but days of war and confusion. The last days will be, as Christ Himself has warned us, like the days before the Flood, and like the days before the destruction of Sodom, and like the days before the fall of Jerusalem [i]. The vision before us speaks of falling Dynasties, of tottering Thrones, of shipwrecked States. As the sixth day of the week, the day before the Sabbath, was the day of Christ's crucifixion, so the time of the sixth seal, the eve of the Sabbath of Eternity, will be a time of rebuke and blasphemy. Antichrist will rage most fiercely when Christ is at the door. Christ Himself

[h] Rev. vi. 12—17. [i] See Matt. xxiv. 37; Luke xvii. 28.

says, "When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find the faith on earth[k]?" The Sun will be darkened: the solar orb of Christ's glorious countenance, shining in His holy Word, will be dimmed and obscured by the mists and clouds of false doctrine. The Moon will become as blood; that is, the Church, which derives her light from Christ, as the moon does from the sun, will not shine in her place in calm and silver lustre, but will be suffused with the blood of intestine strife and fierce controversy. And Stars will fall from heaven; that is, many eminent Teachers, who once shone as bright luminaries in the firmament of the Church, and once guided others in their course over the troubled waves of this world, will fall from their places, and become wandering stars: and the unfolded Volume of the heavens, once bespangled with constellations, will be rolled up as a scroll. The latter days will be days of trouble and sorrow to the Church. And as a necessary consequence, those days will also be times of distress and dismay to the Princes and Potentates of this world. The Rulers of mighty nations, having thrown aside the care of religion as a thing of nought, having broken the bonds of Christ asunder, and having cast away His cords from them[l], will one day rue their proud infatuation and godless presumption. They will rue it when it is too late; they will be stricken with sudden panic and be seized with fearful alarm; they will "cry to the mountains and to the rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of His wrath is come, and who can be able to stand[m]?"

Brethren, the time here described may be near at hand; there are many signs of its approach. Let us

[k] Luke xviii. 8. [l] Ps. ii. 3. [m] Rev. vi. 15, 16.

be prepared for it. And in order that our drooping spirits may be cheered in these dark and evil days, let us look at what follows. After long and patient waiting the number of the elect will be complete. The opening of the *seventh* or last seal reveals to us the Angel coming from the east, and having the seal of the living God; and the blessed company of all faithful people, the innumerable multitude of the tribes of all true Israelites, who have kept the faith, and whom God has sealed as His own, are displayed to our eyes standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and having branches of palm in their hands, and they cry with a loud voice, "Salvation unto our God who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb[n]."

These are they who are coming from the great tribulation, and who washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and He that sitteth upon the throne shall tabernacle among them, and the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes[o].

Once more. To confirm the interpretation now given of this vision of the Apocalypse let me request you to refer to one passage at the close of the book. In the 19th chapter of the Apocalypse, ver. 11, the Divine seer thus speaks: "I saw heaven opened, and behold a *white horse*, and He that sitteth upon him is called faithful and true. And in righteousness He judgeth and maketh war. His eyes are as a flame of fire, and on His head

[n] Rev. vii. 1—11. [o] Rev. vii. 9—17.

many crowns[p]; and He is clothed in a vesture dipped in blood: and His name is called the WORD OF GOD."

No one, therefore, can doubt that He who has been revealed in the first seal as riding on the *white horse* and having the bow in His hand, and going forth conquering and to conquer, is JESUS CHRIST. And what follows? He has His faithful soldiers with Him: "The armies out of heaven are seen following Him on *white horses*, clothed in linen white and pure; and out of His mouth goeth forth a sharp sword to smite the Nations. And He shall rule them with a rod of iron;" for they would not submit to His pastoral crook, and to His sceptre of love. And He Himself, who once trod the winepress of His Passion, is now revealed treading "the winepress of the Wrath of the anger of God the Almighty; and He has on His vesture and on His thigh His name written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS."

You see then *the end of the conflict.* Pause now, and look back on the history of the Church from Christ's first Advent; review what is past as you will see it at His second Coming. Christ at His first Advent went forth "conquering and to conquer," riding on the *white horse.* On that white horse, the horse of purity and victory, He is ever riding, from age to age, from century to century; though oft in gloomy days He is visible only to the eye of faith; but there He is, unchanged and unchangeable, riding on the white horse. And at the end He will emerge from the cloud; the Rider will go forth on that white horse, coming in triumph as a mighty conqueror, trampling beneath His feet all the power and pomp, the pride and presumption, of this world. Then a glorious retinue and train, a magnificent

[p] Royal crowns—διαδήματα.

triumphal cavalcade, will be seen following Him; the armies of His saints and soldiers will be seen riding upon white horses, clothed in His glory, and partners of His victory. Where *then* will be the fierceness of the enemy? "where will be the fury of the oppressor?"

Brethren, let us ever have this vision before us. Christ is always riding on the white horse, conquering and to conquer. The Enemy of Christ and of His Church changes his horse. At one time he goes forth on the fiery red horse of Persecution; and next he shifts his seat, and mounts the black horse of Heresy; and next he ascends the ghastly horse, and has Death and the Grave as his comrades; and he deluges the world with carnage by the fury of antichristian powers. The time of Christ's Coming seems long; the saints, who suffer for the faith, cry aloud for resurrection and judgment: but let them wait patiently, the time will come. There is but one struggle more, the last, the severest conflict. The bold impiety of infidel and godless men; the self-confident vauntings of intellectual pride; the vain-glory of shallow Science and of self-idolizing Philosophy; the overflowings of sensuality and impurity; the ruthlessness of malignant hate and of savage cruelty; the mammon-worship of covetousness and fraud; the reckless indifference of States and Rulers to religion; the open antagonism of earthly powers to the cause of Christ and His Church; the violation and defiance of the laws of the Gospel in Councils and in Senates; the prevalence and patronage of Heresy and Schism; the wild extravagance of Superstition and Fanaticism goading men on to contempt of religion, and to furious assaults upon it, and strengthening the power and swelling the pride of Unbelief: these are signs of the latter days, and they are now visible among us.

Therefore, brethren, in fine, the question for us all is, To which of the two do we belong? Whom are we following? Him who is ever riding on the white horse, conquering and to conquer; or him who rides at one time on the red horse, at another time on the black horse, and at another time on the ghastly horse? Whom are we following? JESUS CHRIST, or the Enemy of Christ and His Church?

Doubtless in this world Satan has strong allies and terrible weapons. These are the trials of our faith. In all the conflicts of this life let us look forward to the end, and let us act accordingly. With whom would you desire to be, then? With those who follow Christ out of heaven in that glorious triumphal procession, clothed in white raiment and riding on white horses, or with Satan and his rebel angels, who will then be cast for ever into the lake of fire, which is the second death?

Printed by Messrs. Parker, Cornmarket, Oxford.

00111432

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 19 September, 2016